THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS

Vol. I. GENESIS TO JOSHUA
„ II. JUDGES TO JOB
„ III. PSALMS TO ISAIAH
„ IV. JEREMIAH TO MATTHEW
„ V. MARK TO JOHN
„ VI. ACTS TO REVELATION

"Dr. Hastings' name will live as that of the greatest Biblical editor of modern times. But I am inclined to think that he has never done better work than in thus presenting to the heart of a child the simplicity and winsomeness of the Word of God."—*The Methodist Times.*

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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY

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"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"
AND OTHER WORKS

VOLUME V

MARK to JOHN

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The King's Highway (Mark i. 3)	1
Angel Ministers (Mark i. 13)	6
Straightway (Mark i. 18)	11
The Little Big Things (Mark v. 43)	17
No Time to Waste (Mark vi. 31)	22
Washing Dishes (Mark vii. 4, AV)	25
Eyes that See (Mark viii. 18)	29
Quarrels (Mark ix. 34)	33
The King's Messengers (Mark xii. 1)	38
The Widow's Mites (Mark xii. 42)	43
An Old Valentine (Mark xiii. 31)	49
Love's Gift (Mark xiv. 8)	52
Bearing Christ's Cross (Mark xv. 21)	57
When No One is Looking (Luke i. 6)	63
What will *You* be? (Luke i. 66)	66
Bethlehem (Luke ii. 4)	70
No Room in the Inn (Luke ii. 7)	74
A Great Awakening (Luke ii. 49)	78
Synagogues (Luke iv. 15)	82
The Compleat Angler (Jer. v. 26; Luke v. 10)	87
The Golden Rule (Luke vi. 31)	91
The Right Kind of Eyes (Luke vi. 41)	95
A Bramble Bush (Luke vi. 44)	100
"Say Grace" (Luke ix. 16)	104
Passing on and Passing It on (Luke x. 31)	108

PAGE

A Drop of Oil (Luke x. 34) 114
The One Thing Needful (Luke x. 42) . . . 118
Lilies (Luke xii. 27) 121
"Be Prepared" (Luke xii. 40) 126
Three Great Trees (Luke xiii. 19, AV) . . . 130
The Lowest Room (Luke xiv. 10) 135
How to get up Higher (Luke xiv. 11) . . . 140
The Lost Lamb (Luke xv. 4) 143
The Lost Coin (Luke xv. 8) 149
Making a Fresh Start (Luke xv. 32) . . . 154
Mammon, the Money-God (Luke xvi. 13) . . 159
The Men who forgot to say "Thank you" (Luke xvii. 17) 164
The Man who thought himself Somebody (Luke xviii. 11) 170
The Man who climbed a Tree (Luke xix. 4) . . 175
Just a Penny (Luke xx. 24) 181
Master Cold-Rice (Luke xxii. 26) . . . 186
The Man who Lost a Little and Gained Much (Luke xxii. 51) 189
How to Follow (Luke xxii. 54) 193
The World that Jesus made (John i. 3) . . 199
A True Hero (John i. 6) 203
The Greatest Discovery (John i. 38) . . . 208
Two Invitations (John i. 39; i. 46) . . . 211
Rock People (John i. 42, AV) 215
Without Guile (John i. 47) 221
The Gift of God (John iv. 10) 225
The Book of Books (John v. 39, AV) . . . 229
The Enchantment of Sin (John v. 40) . . . 233
Believe the Best (John vii. 5) 237
Look beneath the Surface (John vii. 24) . . 241
The Light of the World (John viii. 12) . . 244
A Wonderful Door (John x. 7) 248
The Good Shepherd (John x. 11) . . . 253

PAGE

How the Children helped Jesus (John xii. 13, AV) . 258
Seeing Jesus (John xii. 21) 262
Magnets (John xii. 32) 267
Our Great Example (John xiii. 15) . . . 270
Loving and Giving (John xiii. 34) . . . 275
The Secret of Obedience (John xiv. 15) . . 281
The Man who died for Prince Charlie (John xv. 13) 284
The Crown of Thorns (John xix. 2) . . . 287
Supposing (John xx. 15) 292
His Lambs (John xxi. 15) 296
The Beloved Disciple (John xxi. 20) . . . 299
Curiosity-Boxes (John xxi. 21) 305
The Biggest Biography (John xxi. 25) . . . 310

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS.

THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight.—Mark i. 3.

In Eastern countries the roads are exceedingly bad. They are not made and kept as they are here. They are full of ruts and holes washed out by the rain, and are covered with great rough stones. These stones are thrown out of the fields, or they roll down from the hillside, and it is nobody's business to take them away. Driving or riding over such roads is very unpleasant and dangerous. The wheel sticks in a hole, or jolts over a boulder, and the passenger is almost shaken to pieces. Sometimes he may stick in the mud altogether, or his carriage may lose a wheel or be overturned. So if some great person has to travel over these roads, he takes care that some preparation is made for him beforehand. Before he sets out on his journey, gangs of men are sent on in front. They gather up the stones, fill up the holes, and make the road as even as they can, so that the king or governor may pass over it easily and pleasantly.

Long, long ago a prophet in the land of Palestine spoke these words: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." How could anyone make a highway—a road—for God? We are told in the New Testament of one man who did, who prepared the way of the Lord.

His name was John the Baptist. While Jesus was still living at home, and before He had become known to anyone outside His own little town or had done any of His great miracles, great crowds were gathering to hear John the Baptist preach. And when they came to him, this is what he said, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He said, too, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." And when our Lord came to him to be baptized he said, "This is he." For John the Baptist was only the messenger who went before to tell people to make the way ready for the King.

Who was the King who was coming, and what was His kingdom? The King was Jesus Christ, and His kingdom was the Kingdom of Heaven. When we pray the Lord's Prayer we say, "Thy kingdom come." Christ has begun to rule on earth, but the kingdom will not have come till the whole world and everybody in it call Him their King. And, alas! there are a great many things in the way of the King as He comes into His kingdom.

Here are a few of them: war, and cruelty, and oppression, and injustice. These are big words, but

they come to this—that men are ready to hate, or hurt, or starve, or kill their brother-men. Why? For the sake of a little gain for themselves.

So all these things must be cleared away if the Kingdom of Christ is to come. They are the holes to be filled up and the lumps to be smoothed down in the way of the King. But who is going to do it? Listen to this old story.

Once upon a time there was a prince who came to visit one of the towns in his kingdom. Now the first thing he noticed was that the roads in and near the town were in a shocking condition. They were full of bumps and hollows that made driving very difficult and that hurt the horses' feet; but nobody seemed to think it was their business to put things right. There was plenty of grumbling, to be sure, and everybody was ready to blame somebody else for the state of affairs, but grumbling never did, and never will, mend matters.

Well, the prince took in the situation, and what do you think he did? He went out one night after everyone was in bed and rolled a huge stone right into the middle of the biggest hollow in the road.

Next morning there was a terrible fuss. The boulder blocked the traffic and the drivers got very angry. Then they hit upon the plan of driving on the side-path, and that endangered the lives of the foot passengers. There was great confusion and much shouting and grumbling, but *nobody thought of removing the rock*!

At last a man came along who grasped the situation. "Why," he said, "what a lot of mischief that boulder is doing! I must try to get it out of that." So he put his shoulder to the stone, and with a strong heave pushed it right out of the way. Underneath was a bag of money with a label attached, and on the label was written these words—"To the one who removes the rock."

Now, boys and girls, there is more than one way of dealing with the rocks that lie in the King's path—the rocks of cruelty and injustice and oppression. Some people grumble about them but make no effort to clear them away; others pass them by indifferently; but those who are brave and loyal and unselfish put their shoulder to them and push them right out of the way. And underneath they find a reward—not of money, but of something much more precious—the reward of the King's smile and of His glad "Well done!"

You may think this has not much to do with you. You cannot stir people up to see injustice and wrong, and you cannot pass Acts of Parliament to put things right. But in a few years *you* will be the grown-up people of this country. It is you who will have to vote then *for* the right things and *against* the wrong ones. It will be in your power to prepare the King's way.

At an American election some years ago the Temperance party was defeated. On the day of the

poll many people had worn badges of little bits of coloured ribbon showing with which side they sympathized, and the following day a message boy who was on the Temperance side still went about wearing his bit of ribbon. At one house a servant girl teased him about wearing the colours of a defeated party; but the boy replied proudly, "Just wait a bit! It was the turn of the men yesterday, but it will be the turn of us boys soon!" And it is the turn of these boys now, boys and girls, for they have grown up, and all America has decided in favour of Total Prohibition.

But you don't need to wait till you are grown up. You can begin now—the sooner the better. Before Christ's Kingdom can come in the world, it must come in the hearts of men. What makes the misery in the world? Selfishness and greed and anger and pride—these make the most of it.

Yes, Christ's Kingdom is in the hearts of men. And if you wish His Kingdom to come, you must make Him King of your heart, and before He can come and reign there you must make a way for Him to come. He cannot find room to come and reign while the heart is full of bad thoughts, and angry feelings, and grudges, and unkindness. All these things are blocking up the way of the Lord. "Repent," said John the Baptist. That is just "Be sorry" and clear out of your heart everything that hinders the coming of the King.

ANGEL MINISTERS.

Angels ministered unto him.—Mark i. 13.

SOME years ago there was a very pretty Christmas card for sale. It was the picture of a little baby in its cradle, with its mother bending over it. But when you held it up to the light, two beautiful transparent wings became visible on the mother's shoulders, and instead of a mother putting her baby to sleep you saw an angel. A lady showed this card to a very little girl and explained to her that there are people among us so good and helpful and loving that they are like angels. "Yes," said the child, "I know that, for Miss Johnstone, my teacher, is one."

Now we can all be angels, although we can't grow wings; for an angel is just a "ministering spirit," and to "minister" just means to do some service for others. After the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, the angels came and ministered to Him. But there were human angels, too, who ministered to Him when He was on earth.

One Sabbath Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue, and after the service He went home with His disciple Peter. When they came into the house Jesus was told that Peter's wife's mother was lying very ill

with fever. He went to her, and took her hand, and made her well. And she rose and "ministered" to them. Most likely what she did was to get them some dinner and wait on them. But she was ministering to Jesus in her own way just as the angels were in theirs.

On another occasion Jesus sat at meat in a Pharisee's house. Now it was the custom in that hot land to give the guests, when they arrived, water to wash their tired, dusty feet. Simon the Pharisee had omitted this courteous act, but a woman came to Jesus and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair and anointed them with oil. She, too, was ministering to Jesus.

And just at the end of His life on earth, when He came riding into Jerusalem, the multitude cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way to do Him honour. And the little children He had loved and blessed joined their voices with the voices of the grown-ups and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David!" They, too, were ministering to Jesus.

Jesus no longer treads the ways of men, but He has taught us that wherever there is anyone lonely, or suffering, or sad, or poor, wherever there is anyone who needs us, there He is. And He has told us that, if we minister to them, we are really helping and serving Him; if we are kind to them it is just as though we were kind to Him.

There is a beautiful story which comes to us from olden times. It is called the story of Eager-Heart.

Eager-Heart was a beautiful woman who lived in a tiny cottage in a little village. One day the Great King was expected to pass through the village and to spend a night there. And all the village people began to be very busy getting their houses ready to receive Him; for who knew which house He might choose to sleep in?

Now Eager-Heart also busied herself preparing her little cottage. And she took special pains to make everything very nice, for she had had a dream that the King might stay with her. She swept her floor, and dusted all the corners of her room. She put beautiful clean linen sheets on the bed. She cooked some food lest her visitor should be hungry. Then she lit her lamp and waited.

And while she was waiting, there came a knock at the door. She opened it quickly, but, alas! it was only a poor tired woodman with his wife and little shivering boy. And the woodman asked her if she would take them in and give them shelter for the night, for they were tired, and cold, and hungry. The woman replied, "Oh no, no, not to-night! Come to-morrow night, or the next, or the next. Come any other night except to-night; for to-night I am expecting a dear friend."

The woodman turned sadly away. "It is what they all say," he sighed, "'Come any other night but to-night. We have no room to-night.'" But as he was turning away the little boy looked up into the face of Eager-Heart. And he smiled such a beautiful smile—

the most beautiful smile she had ever seen. The smile went straight to her heart, and the next moment the weary travellers were inside her door, and the little child was lying in the white bed that had been prepared for the King.

Then the woman took a lantern and went out into the village street. She had hoped to shelter the King, and now that could never, never be, but perhaps she might still get a glimpse of Him passing through the village.

And as she went she met the shepherds and the Wise Men coming to look for the King. The Star was leading them, and following them was a great crowd of men and women, all anxious to see the King.

Eager-Heart joined the crowd, and she followed the Wise Men down the street till they stopped at the door of her own little cottage. Then she spoke. "No, no," she said, "not there. That is only my humble home."

But the Wise Men made answer, "Even so; yet the King must be here." And they pointed to the Star which stood still over her doorway. Then the woman made haste to open her door. And lo, her little room was ablaze with light. There in her home were Mary and Joseph, and on the snow-white bed lay the little child Jesus.

Then Eager-Heart fell on her knees and worshipped. And her heart was filled with a great joy and a great thankfulness because she had opened her door to the weary travellers.

No more, as on that night of shame,
  Art thou in dark Gethsemane,
Where worshipping, an angel came
  To strengthen Thee.

But Thou hast taught us that Thou art
  Still present in the crowded street,
In every lonely, suffering heart
  That there we meet.

And not one simple, loving deed,
  That lessens gloom, or lightens pain,
Or answers some unspoken need,
  Is done in vain,—

Since every passing joy we make
  For men and women that we see,
If it is offered for Thy sake,
  Is given to Thee.

STRAIGHTWAY.

Straightway.—Mark i. 18.

I WONDER if you have a pet word—a word you use very often. Many people have a pet word that they like to produce on every possible occasion. This word "straightway" is St. Mark's pet word. He uses it forty-one times, nearly twice as many times as St. Matthew and St. Luke together.

What does St. Mark mean by "straightway"? He just means "immediately," "at once," "straight away." Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and He saw two men casting a net into the sea. He called them to come with Him, and *straightway* they forsook their nets, and followed Him. They didn't say, "Oh yes, we'll come, but just wait a minute till we haul up our nets again or find somebody to look after the boat." They came at once, without any doubt or hesitation, and if they hadn't done so the likelihood is that they would never have come at all, and Jesus would have had to choose two other disciples in their place.

Now I think that word "straightway" is a very good word. There are so many things that it is best to do straightway. Under the clock of a certain factory

there is a sign with the words, "Do it now." It is the motto of the factory, and it means that the best time is the present. It is just another way of saying, "Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day." Well, straightway just means "Do it now." I think it would be not at all a bad idea if we took that word as our motto; so I want to speak to you about a few of the things that it is best to do straightway.

1. *Be diligent straightway.*—Every day brings its own work, and if you don't do to-day's work to-day, then to-morrow will have more to bear than it ought, and neither to-morrow's work nor to-day's will be properly done, because they will both have been hurried and scamped.

And there is another reason why we should be diligent straightway. When time goes past we can never get it back again, and wasted time very often means wasted opportunity.

Do you know the story of how the klipdas came to be without a tail? The klipdas is the rock badger, a little animal something like a rabbit. It lives in South Africa, and the Zulus have a sort of fable about it, which Rudyard Kipling tells.

At the beginning of the world, say the Zulus, none of the animals had tails. But after some time they were told that if they would meet at a certain place on a certain day they would all get their tails. Now the klipdas was a lazy fellow, and when the day arrived he was lying in the grass having a good snooze. By and

by he was wakened by a noise. It was Mr. Monkey passing along, and he seemed to be in a great hurry. "Where are you going?" asked the klipdas. "Why, to get my tail, of course," replied the monkey; "aren't you coming too?" But the klipdas was very comfortable in the grass, so he asked the monkey to be good enough to get both their tails. Well, what do you think Mr. Monkey did? He asked for the klipdas's tail right enough, but instead of handing it on, he joined it to his own tail. And to this day the monkey has an extra long tail and the klipdas has none at all!

So don't let other people excel you because you are too lazy to work. Be diligent straightway. Stick in to your lessons, however dull they may seem. Learn while you learn, and play while you play, and then you will be ready for your opportunity when it comes.

2. *Be obedient straightway.*—I wonder how many of you are that? If I asked those people to hold up their hands who had never said "Wait a minute" when they received an order, I wonder how many hands there would be. Well, I can't tell you for certain, but there is one thing I do know—you wouldn't see my hand held up.

What makes us say things like "Wait a minute," or "Why must I?" It is chiefly pride. We know we have to do the thing in the end of the day, but we want to show that we have a will too, and so we give a wriggle first.

Now I am going to tell you something. You will

never grow up unless you learn to obey. You may grow into big men and women, but your minds and wills will never grow up. For one of the first lessons you will learn when you go out into the world is that everybody has to obey somebody else. Employees have to obey their masters, masters have to obey the wishes of the public or their business will fail. Soldiers and sailors have to obey their superior officers. Even the king cannot do as he likes.

Now if you have to obey, don't you think it is a great deal better to do it pleasantly and at once than unwillingly and with a grumble? And if you can't make yourself do it any other way, try to imagine that you are a soldier and your father or mother your superior officer. Of course no soldier dare say, "Wait a minute," or "Why must I?"

3. *Be kind straightway.*—Somebody was once trying to persuade the Duke of Wellington to do something that was not quite right, and he pointed out that the right thing would cost him a great deal of trouble. "I don't care a rap," said the Duke, "I haven't time not to do right." Well, I think we might say that we haven't time not to be kind.

There is such a thing as being kind too late. I read a story the other day about a man who spent his days vainly trying to smooth out the wrinkles that his wild boyhood had made on his mother's brow.

When he was a boy he gave his mother a great deal of trouble and worry by his bad ways. Nothing she

could say or do made him the least bit better and he did not seem to mind though day by day her face grew more careworn. Finally, he ran away to sea. At first he had a very hard time, but by and by he began to get on and he rose to be a captain. All these years his mother never ceased to think of him and write to him, and at last he resolved to go home and try to make up to her for all the unkindness of his earlier years.

So he came home, rented a small farm, and took his mother to live with him. But though he loaded her with kindness and love, nothing could undo the harm he had done. No amount of love and care could smooth out the wrinkles on her brow, or turn her snow-white hair black again. He had begun to be kind too late.

Boys and girls, be wiser than that boy. I am glad he tried to smooth away the wrinkles, but it would have been infinitely better if he had never let them come. You have still your chance. You have not begun to put the wrinkles on mother's brow, or perhaps you have put only one or two tiny creases. Don't put any more there. Be kind to her now and you will have no bitter regrets. And not only to your mother, but to everyone around you, be kind. If you get the chance of being kind take it "straightway." It may never come back again. And remember that every opportunity of being kind is a gift sent from God. It is something He gives us to do for Him in the world.

4. *Follow Christ straightway.*—It is never too soon to begin to do that. He called a little child to Him once on earth and He is still calling little children. He wants you for His very own: He needs you. Many people have put off following Him till later and it is their most lasting regret. Imitate Simon and Andrew, who came straightway when they were called. He is calling you now. Will you go to Him straightway, or will you keep Him waiting through the weary years till the best of your life is past and you can offer Him only the dregs?

THE LITTLE BIG THINGS.

He commanded that something should be given her to eat.—Mark v. 43.

Our text to-day is a wonderful ending to a wonderful story. In some ways it is the most wonderful bit of that wonderful story. I wonder why!

Of course you have all heard the tale. You know how one day, whilst Jesus was talking to a crowd of people, a man pressed through the throng and, flinging himself at Jesus' feet, begged Him to come and save his child who was even then dying. His name was Jairus, and he was a great man in his own way, for he was what the Jews called a "ruler" of the synagogue—that is to say, he was chairman at all the church meetings. As the Jews were very proud of their churches and their religion that meant that he was a much-thought-of man. Some people believe that the synagogue of which he was ruler was the synagogue of which we hear in another miracle—the synagogue which had been built at Capernaum by the Roman centurion whose sick servant Jesus healed. Perhaps Jairus was one of those who pleaded with Jesus on that occasion for the cure of the centurion's servant. Perhaps that was why he came to the Master

again when the physicians told him that there was no hope for his child. She was his only child, and we know that he loved her dearly, for when he spoke of his "little daughter" he used a pet word, a term of endearment—"my little girlie" he really said. He felt sure that even now, although the case was desperate, Christ had but to lay His hand on the child, and at His touch her sickness would pass away, and she would be his healthy, merry, happy little daughter once again.

You remember how Jesus went at once to help, and how the crowd, who were curious to see what would happen, followed. You remember how the procession—for it was almost that—halted because one of the crowd, a woman who had been ill for years, touched the tassel at the corner of Christ's robe and was immediately cured of her illness. You can imagine how impatient the anxious father must have been at the interruption, how he must have said to himself, "This woman could have waited, but every moment is precious if my child is to be saved." And whilst Jesus was still speaking to the woman you remember how there came a messenger from the ruler's house saying, "There is no use troubling the Master further. The child is dead." It must have been a terrible moment for the poor ruler, when he heard that he was too late. But Jesus, we are told, paid no heed to the words of the messenger. He just said to the ruler, "Fear not, only believe." He turned to the crowd and asked them to come no farther, and then

He picked out three of His disciples to accompany Him and went on with the ruler to his home.

He did not need anyone to tell Him which was the house, for long before He reached it the cries of the mourners marked it out. In Palestine you must know that when anyone died the custom was to announce the death to the neighbourhood by loud weeping and wailing. So when Christ arrived on the scene He found the usual crowd of friends and neighbours wailing and beating their breasts and lamenting the lost child. To these He said, "Why do you weep and make such a tumult? The child is not dead, she is only sleeping." But they laughed Him to scorn. Sleeping indeed! They knew better than that! And so Christ turned out of the house that scoffing, unbelieving crowd of men and women, and, taking with Him only the three disciples and the child's father and mother, He went into the room where she lay.

He took her little cold hand in his warm strong grasp, and He spoke to her two words, "Child, arise!" just as your mother sometimes wakens you in the morning with the words, "Child, it's time to get up." And at His touch the little girl opened her eyes and sprang up feeling as well and happy as any of you do when you are called to rise on a sunny summer morning. She was brought back not merely to life—that would have been marvellous enough—but she was brought back to health. She did not have to rise and feel her legs shaky, she did not need to have breakfast in bed for weeks, nor did she require tonics from the chemist

and a change of air to make her cheeks rosy. She was absolutely well all in a moment.

Then came what I think the most wonderful bit of the story—the bit we have chosen for our text. Jesus told her father and mother to give her something to eat. Was that more wonderful than bringing her back to life? Yes, in a way it was. You see when you think that Christ is the great Son of God it seems quite natural that He should perform a splendid miracle. But when you think that He is the great Son of God it seems extraordinary that He should remember that a little sick girl who has been living on practically nothing for days but who has suddenly become quite well again must be very hungry. The child's father and mother were so overjoyed and excited that they never thought of anything so ordinary and commonsensical as food. But Jesus, who thought of everything, especially of all the little things that other people considered of no importance, remembered that Jairus' "little girlie" needed a good meal.

Now I wonder if you have ever noticed that the greatest men the world has known have been the men who remembered the little things that less great men forgot. They were busy all day with big things, but in the midst of their "busyness" they found time to remember the little things. And it is the little things, after all, that often matter most in life.

To-day there lives in a certain famous Scottish town

a certain famous man. If I were to tell you his name you might not recognize it, but some of your fathers and mothers would. Shall I tell you the greatest thing I ever heard about that man? It was what some people would call a very little thing indeed. He was born in a little manse in the Highlands of Scotland. He was the eldest son of the house and he had several brothers younger than himself. They were all very clever, and by and by when they grew up they scattered far and wide over the kingdom. But every year in the summer they came back for a few weeks to their little old home, for they had a mother whom they all loved dearly. They spent those weeks fishing, golfing, cycling, walking, or lazing in the sun; and they all had a jolly time together. But it was the greatest and most famous among them who remembered the little things. He took off his coat and he mowed the lawn. He got the shears from the tool shed and he trimmed the privet hedge. A visitor remarked to his mother how neat the garden looked. "Oh yes," she replied, with a smile, "that's Robert. The others never think of little things like that, *but he always remembers.*"

Boys and girls, Christ always remembered. Shall we remember too?

NO TIME TO WASTE.

They had no leisure so much as to eat.—Mark vi. 31.

WHAT do you call a busy day? Is it a day filled with some hard work at your lessons, some good fun at your games, and some kind deeds for others? These, well mixed, make the best kind of busy day for young folk.

If you ask father what he calls a busy day, he will probably laugh and say, "All days are busy days with me, young man." And mother? She too will smile, and perhaps sigh at the same time, and her reply will be, "I wish I saw one that wasn't busy."

Do you know what Christ called a busy day? The text tells us. It was a day when there were so many people coming and going and demanding help or healing that neither He nor His disciples had a moment to eat a meal. As Mark puts it, "they had no leisure so much as to eat."

Now, I don't think you have lived many, if any, days like that. But your father often knows what it is to snatch a hurried meal down town instead of coming home to dinner. And your mother could tell you of days during spring-cleaning time when she was so rushed that she took a queer sort of picnic

lunch in the middle of the day, and then felt desperately tired and headachy at night.

Why were Jesus and His disciples so busy? Well, the disciples had just returned from a very successful missionary journey during which they had healed many and taught many. They had spread the fame of their great Master through the countryside, and people were flocking in crowds to see the wonderful Healer and to ask His aid. It was just before the feast of the Passover too, when thousands were going up to Jerusalem; and these also, in passing, wanted to see or hear the famous new Teacher. If you can imagine a crowd gathered to hear a celebrated preacher, and another crowd waiting to get attention from a well-known doctor; if you can imagine those two crowds mixed together and multiplied by ten, you will have some idea of the number of people who were seeking help from Christ.

I hope none of you will ever have to put as much into twelve hours as had Christ and His followers that day. But I still more earnestly hope that none of you will put as little into the round of the clock as did the man who spent day after day for years trying to make an egg stand on its end. That was time stupidly wasted, and time is much too precious and sacred to waste. Jesus thought so. He said once, "The night cometh, when no man can work." He knew how short was to be His time on earth, and He felt He must fill every fleeting moment of it.

How do you spend your time? Do you make the

most of every moment? Do you work hard when you are working, and play hard when you are playing, and really rest when you are resting? Do you divide out your time so that there is enough for everything you want to do? Or are you always borrowing a few minutes from one hour to make up the time you have lost in another? Are you ever like the boy who excused himself for not learning a lesson by saying, "I had no time"? "Time!" cried his master. "You had all the time there was!" Yes, we have all the time there is; and it is usually our own fault if we lose any.

Christ spent His time on earth doing the works of God, His Father. He said Himself, "I must work the works of him that sent me." Don't you think it would be a good thing if we could imitate Him in this? Don't you think it would be well for us if we could so work and play and rest that we could take as our motto the words that are on the clock at the Salvation Army Headquarters in London—"Every hour for Jesus"? It would be fine—wouldn't it?—if at the end of our lives we could say, "I spent every hour for Jesus." Does that sound impossible? It may: but it isn't. If we never do or say what we should be ashamed that Jesus should find us doing or saying, if we honestly try to do right whatever happens, if we are busy and cheerful and jolly, and try always to think of others before ourselves, we are spending our time as Jesus would have us spend it. We are spending every hour for Him.

WASHING DISHES.

The washing of cups, and pots.—Mark vii. 4 (AV).

I WONDER how many of you like washing dishes? When you were tiny I expect you were proud indeed if mother or the maid allowed you to help to dry. You were most careful not to let the plates or cups fall, and you polished them with the towel till not a drop of moisture was left either on the inside or on the outside.

Perhaps now that you are a little older you are not so keen. You think when mother asks you to leave your game for half an hour to wash a huge pile of greasy plates that you would rather do anything else than wash dishes. But there are worse things than washing dishes if you set about it in the right way, and take a pride in doing it thoroughly.

Now, who would suppose that washing dishes would be mentioned in the Bible? Ah! but it is. Turn up the seventh chapter of Mark, the fourth verse. Near the end of the verse you will find these words, "the washing of cups, and pots."

Christ spoke these words to the Pharisees. You know who the Pharisees were. They were a class

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among the Jews who were specially particular about observing the laws, and who thought that by being so particular and perfect they were pleasing God. They thought so much of keeping the laws that they went on adding new laws just for the pleasure of keeping them.

Some of their laws sound ridiculous to us. For instance, they did not think it enough to sit down to meals with clean hands. Although their hands had already been washed they had to be ceremonially washed in a special way before a meal could be partaken of. Even that did not satisfy some of these Pharisees, for the strictest among them washed their hands between each course and at the end of the meal as well. How would some of us like that? We find it hard enough to wash them once—don't we? And we are rather cross when we are sent to do it over again, and mother makes remarks about our nails being in mourning.

Then the Jews had rules about the proper way to wash dishes. Indeed, there were so many rules about dish-washing that they filled thirty chapters of the Book of Laws.

We are rather amused at such ideas. But they were more than amusing, they were sad. And that is how Christ thought of them; for He saw that the Pharisees were so busy obeying those outside laws of cleanliness that they never thought of keeping their hearts clean. As Christ put it, they washed the outside of the cup and platter but they left the inside

dirty. Now, what would you think of washing only the outside of your cups and plates? It would be a queer sort of washing. The inside is the important part, as we all know. It is the inside that contains the food or the drink. It is the inside that gets soiled, the inside that most needs to be kept clean.

When Christ rebuked the Pharisees for washing the outside and neglecting the inside He meant that they kept the outward laws of cleanliness but that their hearts were anything but clean. Their hearts, He said, were soiled with greed and hatred and pride and hypocrisy, instead of being beautiful with love and mercy and compassion and gentleness. These men might keep the laws as they liked, but so long as their hearts were black with such passions, they would never be clean in God's sight.

For God looks first into our hearts, and if He finds them full of wicked feelings He goes away both sad and sorrowful, even though our hands may be spotless and our clothes white as snow. You see, with God it is the heart that counts most, though of course He wishes us to be outwardly clean too.

The other day I read a story of a Chinaman who began to attend a mission class in China. He was a washerman but he didn't look like it, for, sad to say, he was anything but clean in his dress and ways.

One Sunday the missionary gave out a text for the class to learn, and it was, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness." Next week the Chinaman turned up with the text almost rubbed out of his New Testament, so often had his fingers moved backwards and forwards over the words. One word had puzzled him. That was the word *cleanse*. The missionary soon explained how Christ washes away the sin from our heart and makes it clean.

On the following Sunday, when the hour for the class arrived, a fine-looking man came in and took a seat. The missionary thought he was a new arrival, and noticed that he was in Western dress, that he had no pigtail, that his hair was neatly brushed, his long finger-nails pared, and his face shining like a new coin. What was her surprise to discover that it was her old friend the dirty Chinaman! He smiled up into her face and said, "Jesus Christ make me clean inside and outside." He had got the clean heart and then he had felt ashamed of his uncleanly ways, and he had made himself clean outwardly as well.

Boys and girls, let us be sure that we have the cup clean inside as well as outside.

God gives us soap and water and common sense, and He expects us to use them and do the outside washing ourselves. But there is only One who can give us the inward cleanness of the clean heart, and that is Christ. Let us go to Him and say, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord!"

EYES THAT SEE.

Having eyes, see ye not?—Mark viii. 18.

DURING the summer house-letting season, two ladies went to the coast to "look over" a small villa. After they had been shown everything about the premises they said to each other, "It's just the sort of place we want; we'll take it." They walked along the street a little way, and then the older of the two asked, "Was there a scullery?—I cannot remember anything," she added. "What was the outlook from the parlour window? The parlour seemed a long, narrow, dull room." "It was square," her companion answered; "where were your eyes?" And she described every room in the house, down to the scullery.

The second lady had eyes and could use them. One meets people like that occasionally. Barrie, the man who wrote *Peter Pan*, describes in one of his books, called *A Window in Thrums*, a young woman called Leeby. She was just a country girl; some of you children would probably have called her stupid. The minister's wife gave her that character at any rate. One night when she was invited to the manse to tea she was left for a minute or two in the bedroom. "And," said her hostess, "when I returned she was still

standing on the same spot in the centre of the floor. . . . It is a pity she cannot make use of her eyes, if not of her tongue." She did not know Leeby. That same young woman took home to her mother a most graphic account of everything in the room. She could describe every article it contained, down to the illustrated paper that had been used to "set" the fire.

Now, there are boys and girls who certainly have not Leeby's faculty. Even when it comes to seeing the beautiful world in which they live, they run about and enjoy themselves, they grow to manhood, and they see nothing.

This faculty of seeing Nature is a higher one than that of being able to note the contents of a room. God has given us the wonderful sense of sight; and surely He meant us to use it, when He made the world so beautiful.

A lady came back to Edinburgh for a visit, after having been absent from it for a very long time. "What a wonderfully beautiful place it is," she said. "As a girl, I took everything about it for granted; now, I seem to be able really to *see* it." Her "seeing" eye had been developed.

An artist sat down to sketch a landscape in colour. A friend who knew nothing of painting looked over his shoulder. "You are putting all sorts of absurd colours into your picture," he remarked. "Stick to Nature: that field is just plain green." "It seems so to you," the artist answered; "but just look for a little while, then you will begin to see the other tints"; and, said

the friend long years afterwards, "that was my first lesson in painting."

"I never see the Thames as you have painted it," someone said to Turner. "Don't you wish you did?" was the answer. The eye can be trained to appreciate the mysterious beauty of the world we live in; and the way to get training is just to look and look, and go on looking.

Now, beyond and above the beauty of this world, there is the beauty of real goodness. Many people have the faculty of seeing that. There are boys and girls who have it. They seem almost to be born with it.

But even better still, there are boys and girls trying every day to develop real goodness within themselves. How is it done, do you think? They keep the right kind of company. The man who looked over the artist's shoulder and watched him work began to be able to see a little. He learned that there were colours in Nature that the ordinary eye never sees. The thought even stirred within him, "I also want to be a painter." You will find that it is the same with the beauty of goodness. If we keep in the company of good people we begin to see things as they do; we want to be like them.

The "beauty of holiness" is the Bible expression. Like Nature; holiness is mysterious; there is more in it than mere goodness. Men and women learn about it, and boys and girls too, when they keep in the

company of Jesus Christ. Their eyes are opened in a wonderful way. To them, the world and the beautiful trees and the flowers and the sunshine just speak of the love of the great Father. There are men and women who keep so constantly in Christ's company that they see Him in everything.

Some folks as can afford,
So I've heard say,
Sets up a sort of cross
Right in the garden way,
To mind 'em of the Lord:

But I, when I do see
Thic apple tree,
An' stoopin' limb
All spread wi' moss,
I think of Him,
And how He talks wi' me.

That poem is supposed to be spoken by a Wiltshire peasant; but you too, boys and girls, can see and find Christ everywhere.

QUARRELS.

They had disputed one with another.—Mark ix. 34.

THE disciples were journeying through Galilee, and as they walked they were having a discussion; they were disputing one with another.

And what is a dispute? Well, if it isn't a quarrel it is next door to one; it is the entrance hall of the house of quarrelling. In this case the disciples were probably hot and tired, for they had walked a long way, and very likely the discussion did end in a quarrel.

And what do you think they were disputing about? They were arguing about who should be the greatest. That seems a queer thing to argue about. Does it? I wonder! Have you never disputed about who should get the best place in a game, or who was to have the first turn of something nice?

You see the disciples had a wrong idea about what Jesus had come to the world to do. They thought He was going to set up an earthly kingdom and they wondered what place each of them was to have in it. I expect Judas wanted to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and some of the others were putting forward their claim to be Prime Minister. Perhaps

Peter said he thought he ought to have that place because he could speak so well. And then his brother Andrew retorted that Jesus had found him first, and if it hadn't been for him Peter would never have come to Jesus, and as he, Andrew, had been the first comer he had a first claim. Then perhaps John struck in and said he thought he should be Prime Minister because he was young and strong and Jesus had made a special friend of him. And his brother James said, "Pooh! a baby like you! You're far too young for such responsibility. I've been with Him just as much as you and I should be much more suitable for the post." And so on it went until, when they came to Capernaum, they were all feeling very hot and cross and annoyed with each other.

But when they had reached the house in which they were going to stay, and had all had a good wash and a meal and a rest, Jesus asked them what they had been reasoning about on the road. He didn't use the word "disputing," because He knew they were still feeling rather tired and somewhat sore about the argument; and when He asked the question in that way, so gently and kindly, they began to feel rather ashamed of themselves. And then He went on to explain that the greatest person was the one who served others, the one who did not think about himself at all because he was so busy thinking about others.

Now people are very much the same to-day as they were when Peter and James and John and the rest

lived. People still quarrel, and yet quarrelling causes a very great deal of unnecessary unhappiness in the world. It spoils the peace of homes, it breaks hearts, sometimes it costs men their lives. Even boys and girls can make a home very uncomfortable and miserable by their squabbles.

Then why do people quarrel at all?

1. Well, sometimes they quarrel because they are touchy. I once stayed in a house where there were four touchy children. It was like living on the top of a volcano! You never knew when there was going to be an eruption. The tiniest trifle caused an explosion.

Now of course if you are going to flare up at the smallest trifle you may expect people to torment you. You just lay yourself out for it. The best way to prevent their tormenting is to pretend you don't mind. And then, by and by, you will come really not to mind.

2. Another reason why people quarrel is that they are too fond of their own opinion and they won't give other people room for theirs. Now it is a good thing to have an opinion of your own, but it is a wise thing to remember at the same time that the other boy's opinion may be just as good as yours, and that, at any rate, it seems better to him.

Did you ever hear the story of the two knights who met at a wayside fountain? They sat facing each other, and between them, suspended from a piece of statuary, hung a shield. As they were resting by the

fountain they began to talk, and at first they got along in quite a friendly way. But unfortunately one of them, in the course of conversation, mentioned the shield and called it a bronze shield. "Begging your pardon," said the other, "this shield is iron, not bronze." "Not at all," replied the first man; "I will stake my life on it that it is bronze." And so they continued until they came to blows; and it was only when they were well-nigh exhausted with fighting that they discovered that the shield was bronze on one side and iron on the other! So they were both right and both wrong.

There is probably something right and something wrong in your opinion and in the other boy's too. Don't be pig-headed. Try to see things with other people's eyes as well as with your own. It is the one-sided view that has been the cause of most of the terrible persecutions in churches and nations.

3. But the chief cause of quarrels is selfishness. Two people want the same thing and neither is willing to give in.

Once there were two boys who were great chums. One day one of them said to the other, "Come on and let us quarrel. It will be great fun. I'll say this stick is mine and you'll say it's yours and then we'll have a jolly old squabble." "Right-o!" said the second boy, "you begin." So the first boy started. "This stick is mine." "Oh, all right," said boy number two, "you're welcome to it!" So the quarrel fell through because

neither of them really wanted the stick, and it takes two to make a quarrel.

If you want something that somebody else wants it is a great deal better to lose it than to lose your temper. That seems a hard thing to say, but your temper is sure to be the more valuable thing of the two. We can't always have our own way in this life, and it is very good for us to have to give in sometimes.

Now, some of us have quarrelsome natures, and it is more difficult for us than it is for others to "keep a calm sough," as they say in Scotland. What are we to do? Well, if we feel that our tempers are getting out of control, it is not a bad plan just to walk out of the room till we calm down a bit. And if we have quarrelled with somebody, let us be the first to make it up. If we think we are in the right, all the more reason why we should make the advance. Probably the other boy or girl is wanting to make it up and hasn't the courage to do it.

Boys and girls, life is much too short for quarrels, and there are quite enough hard things to bear in it without your adding to its difficulties. Make up your mind that you won't do it, and if you find it a hard struggle remember that the surest cure for quarrelling is to get our hearts filled with the love of Jesus. Then for His sake we shall love other people, and love "is not easily provoked."

THE KING'S MESSENGERS.

A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.—Mark xii. 1.

ONCE upon a time there was a great and good King who loved his subjects with an abounding love. His one concern was that they should be happy and that they should make the very best of their lives. He built beautiful cities for them and laid out lovely gardens. In the gardens were fruit trees and many gorgeous flowers. The birds sang all day long amid the leafy branches, and the bees hummed among the flowers. Flocks and herds grazed in the green pastures, and deer roamed on the mountain-sides.

Now you will think that these people should have been very happy, but in their hearts was an evil thing which spoiled all. It was just like a little grub in the heart of a beautiful apple. On the outside all was fair, but within was something which was slowly and secretly destroying the beautiful fruit. The ugly grub was ingratitude. The people had come to regard as their right what had been given them as a great trust, and they forgot to give thanks to the noble King who had given them all things.

There came a day when the King had to go far away into a distant country, but he was such a wonderful Sovereign that although he was far away he could see and know all that was going on in his land. Before he left, he arranged that he would send his ambassadors at certain seasons to help the people, and to receive from them their allegiance, along with some of the fruits of the land. For the Sovereign knew that his subjects could never be truly happy if they lived entirely for themselves, and that it was only in giving back a little of the bounty they had received that they could find real and lasting joy.

So the King set out for the far country and after a time the people began to forget him. They lived more and more for themselves—for the grub was eating away more and more of their good heart—until at last there came a day when they no longer wished to remember their Sovereign. They wished to forget him, because they wanted to keep all the good things for themselves. Yet some of the better people felt that life wasn't so good as it had been in the old days.

Now, the King saw all that was happening in the hearts of his subjects, and he was very, very sad, because he knew that they were hurting themselves terribly. They were hurting his great heart of love too, but he thought not of himself but of them. So he sent one of his ambassadors to show them what they were doing, to receive back some of the fruit, and to help them to kill the wicked grub in their hearts.

But when the people saw the ambassador they became very angry. This was the man who stood in the place of the King and who would fain remind them of him and of all they owed him. Well, they did not want to remember the King. Thinking of him made them remember their own faithlessness and ingratitude. This was the man who came to claim the King's rightful portion. Well, they wanted to keep everything to themselves. So they beat the ambassador and sent him away empty.

When the messenger returned, the heart of the King was very sad. Yet he loved the people so tenderly that he would not give up hope, and he sent to them another of his good ambassadors. This man was dealt with even worse than the first. The people not only maltreated him, they wounded him sorely. And after many weary days and nights he dragged his way back to the King's palace to tell of his failure.

Still the good King did not despair. Another ambassador was found willing to risk his life. But when the people saw him coming they were beside themselves, and they did a very awful thing: they slew the King's ambassador.

Perhaps you will think that the King then gave up trying to help these ungrateful subjects. Ah, but you don't know how wonderful the King was! The great passion of his life was to save these people from themselves, so, never tiring in his efforts to rescue them, he sent messenger after messenger to them. But some of the ambassadors were beaten, others were killed, all

were shamefully treated; not one of them received a hearing.

At last the great King had but one messenger left—his only and beloved Son. But his heart yearned so over these poor, foolish, mistaken children that he would not spare even him. "Surely," said he, "surely they will reverence my Son. He is all I have left. This is the last thing I can do for them." And the Prince, who had the great loving heart of his Father, went willingly, knowing well what would be done to him, yet ready to make the sacrifice if by any means the people could be saved.

But when the people saw him they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. We shall not be troubled any more about our allegiance to the King, for we shall seize as our own what he has only lent us." So they murdered the Prince—the brave young Prince who had given up everything to save them.

Boys and girls, God is the great and good King who has "given us richly all things to enjoy." Of old He spoke to the people of Israel by His prophets, but they refused to listen. Some they beat, some they cruelly stoned, some they killed. Last of all He sent His dearly beloved Son, but Him they mocked and scourged, Him they crucified.

God is still sending us His messengers. He speaks to us every day by our parents, by our teachers, by the lives of great and noble men and women, by the Bible, by good books, by the glory of the sunset, by the

grandeur of the everlasting hills, by the beauty of the flowers, by the voice of conscience, but most of all by the life and death and unfailing love of His well-beloved Son.

To-day He is waiting patiently outside each heart. Are we going to send Him empty away, or shall we open the door of our heart and let Him in?

THE WIDOW'S MITES.

And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing.—Mark xii. 42.

THREE days before His crucifixion Jesus paid His last visit to the Temple. He sat for a while in the outer court, which was called the "Court of the Women." Now in this court were thirteen chests into which the people cast money for the upkeep of the Temple. These chests were called trumpets, because they had large mouths shaped like trumpets into which the money was dropped. And as Jesus sat there He began to watch the people putting their offerings into these boxes.

Now Jesus had wonderful eyes which could read into the hearts of people, and He could see not only what those men and women were casting in, but also the reason for which the money was given, and the spirit in which it was given, and just how much it had cost the giver.

Very likely this is what Jesus beheld.

First came a Pharisee with proud head and pompous step. With a great clatter he dropped his gift into one of the chests. He tried to make as much noise as he could so that he might attract attention to his

generosity. Christ looked into that man's heart, and saw that he gave his gift for show, so that men might speak well of him.

Then came a rich man in gorgeous clothing. With a careless toss he threw in a large offering. And Christ saw that that man's gift was costing him nothing. He was giving from mere habit; and, large though the sum was, he had not been obliged to deny himself one thing he wanted in order to give it.

Then came a miser, who loved his gold above all other things. He paused long in front of the chests and fingered his money as if it gave him pain to part with it. Just as he was going to drop in a coin he changed it for one of less value. And Jesus saw that that man gave just because custom and decency required it. The gift was no real gift at all, for it was bestowed with a grudge.

Many more people passed by—some of them just ordinary men and women who gave as a duty, or because it was the custom, or because they loved God's House.

At last came a lonely widow, poor and shabbily dressed. She walked with bowed head as if she were ashamed to be seen among so many who were wealthy and well clad. And into the Treasury she cast two mites—two of the smallest Jewish coins, of less value together than our farthing. What a tiny clink they made; how little they would buy for the upkeep of the Temple—only a few drops of oil for one of the lamps! The disciples looked at the widow's gift with contempt,

but Christ knew that she had given all her living. He knew that she had no more money at home to buy food for that day, He knew that she had given her mites out of grateful love to God. And He called His disciples round Him and told them that the poor widow had given far, far more than the rich men. For they had given out of the surplus which they did not require, but she had given all that she had, even all her living.

Now there are some lessons which this story teaches us. And the first is—*Don't be discouraged if you have only pennies to give.*

There is a beautiful fairy-tale which tells how in a far-off country there lived a good and wise king. His people used to bring him gifts to show how much they loved him.

Now in that country there lived also a poor old woman. She was so poor that she had only a copper farthing to give away, and she said, "It is so small a coin I am ashamed to give it. Perhaps I'd better keep it to myself." But when she came to the palace and saw all the other people giving their presents, she just felt she must give hers too. So very tremblingly she pressed her poor little copper coin into the hand of the great king.

And what do you think happened? When the king looked at his hand there lay in it—not a copper farthing, but a shining gold piece! When he saw how poor and shabby the old woman was he was deeply

touched, and he said, "This is too much for you to give." So he took her withered hand and put the coin back into it. And then a wonderful thing happened. When the coin lay in the old woman's hand it turned to copper again. Then she gave it back to the king, and once more it became a shining gold piece.

And, boys and girls, the copper coins you give to Jesus may be as coins of gold to Him. He who knows everybody's heart may value your pennies more than a rich man's pounds. So don't keep your pennies back because you think they are not worth offering. Perhaps the widow in the Bible story went home thinking that after all she had given very little. But she had given much more than she knew—she had given joy to the heart of Christ.

In the second place, *give something that costs a little sacrifice.*—It is that which makes the gift worth offering.

I read two stories lately about children who gave up to give.

The first was about some little boys and girls far away in New South Wales. Someone told them about the chocolate-coloured people who lived in the island of New Guinea, to the north of Australia, and how the missionaries were trying to tell them about Jesus. Those children in New South Wales became very much interested, and they wanted to help the missionaries, so what do you think they did? Well, they got a big box and covered it with chocolate-coloured paper.

Then they put into it all the pennies they could spare, and for some time they went without chocolates and other sweets and gave the pennies thus saved to the chocolate box for the chocolate people.

The other story is about two children in this country. During the war somebody wrote home from France asking for mouth-organs for the soldiers to cheer them in the trenches. A little boy and girl sent over their own mouth-organs, and the boy sent a note with them saying that he was sorry they were not new but that he and his sister had no sixpences to spend, and they hoped they would do. The mouth-organs had evidently been great favourites, and it must have cost the children a struggle to part with them. A special correspondent at the Front thought the incident of so much importance that he mentioned it in his report.

And, lastly, I want you to notice that *it is the way we give a thing, not the gift itself, that matters.*—It is the loving heart that makes the gift valuable. That is what St. Paul meant when he said, "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Let me tell you a legend which will show what I mean.

In Constantinople stands the beautiful mosque of St. Sophia. It was once a Christian church and was built by the Christian Emperor Justinian fourteen hundred years ago. It cost more than twenty million pounds, and it took ten thousand workmen more than twenty years to complete it. When it was finished

the Emperor caused the architect to carve above the lofty entrance door these words: "Justinian gives this House to God."

On the day of the opening, the Emperor looked up in pride of heart to see this inscription, and to his amazement found the words: "The widow Euphrasia gives this House to God." The monarch was very angry, and he ordered that this widow should be brought to him. But nobody knew who she was, and they had to search long for her. At last they found her—a poor, aged woman, who lived at the foot of the hill on which the mosque was built. They brought her trembling into the presence of the Emperor, who accused her of changing the inscription. But the old woman replied, "Sire, I only took a little straw which I had plucked from my mattress and cast it before the oxen who dragged the stones up to the building."

And when the Emperor heard these words he said, "Friend, thy gift was accepted before the great King who lived and died humble, because it was the gift of love, but mine was refused, because it was the gift of pride. May God grant that when we meet before His Throne I may be allowed a footstool at thy feet."

AN OLD VALENTINE.

Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.—Mark xiii. 31.

LONG ago boys and girls, and sometimes even grown-up people, used to count the fourteenth day of February as a special day in the year. They looked for the postman in the morning, because they expected their best friends to send them valentines.

Your impression of a valentine may be that of a cheap, comic picture. But some of us have a faint recollection of the time when a valentine, instead of being comic, often conveyed a beautiful message.

The custom of sending valentines is a very old one. It began in superstition, as early as the fifteenth century. A company of people gathered together on the fourteenth of February, the day on which the birds were supposed to find their mates, and the names of a select number of one sex were, by an equal number of the other, put into some vessel; after that every one drew a name, which for the time being they called their valentine; and they looked upon the drawing of that name as an omen that one day they would love each other. Later, valentines became a medium simply

to convey thoughts of love; and it is about a valentine of this kind that I want to speak.

I found it at the breaking-up of a family home. It lay at the bottom of an old work-box. Though faded with age, it must one day have been a dainty thing. Round the edge the paper was embossed, so that it looked like fine lace. I cannot say that the picture adorning it attracted me much, but the words, written in very delicate and old-fashioned penmanship, did:

> This little tribute which I send,
> I hope you will receive,
> And keep it for the sake of one
> Who never will deceive.

They seemed to bring a resurrection of lives that had been lived long ago. The little valentine itself was apparently a treasure. One person had loved another very much; perhaps each had loved the other. They had at least been friends. Had their friendship gone for nothing? We cannot tell.

I want you to think about the last line of this old rhyme—one "who never will deceive." Isn't that just a description of Jesus? Sometimes our earthly friends deceive us, but Jesus never does. He knew what true love meant; He knew about the keeping of promises; He knew about you and me; and He left us this wonderful promise: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." When He spoke them, I believe His audience would scarcely

grasp their meaning. They were just obscure, commonplace men. Jesus Himself was known as a working man. Yet He said, "My words shall not pass."

Think what that means, boys and girls. The hills that we call "everlasting" will pass away, and our friends will die, but the things that Jesus has said about life and death will remain for ever and ever. Great philosophers lived before He came to earth. They had the best education that Greece and Rome could give; but where is their influence now? As a power to make people live better lives, it is gone.

The story of the religion of Jesus Christ reads like the story of a wonderful miracle. His words have helped the very best people in the world for over nineteen hundred years. And they were written for you. You have them in your Testament. They are about things that abide for ever; they are about love and eternal life. Let each boy and girl think of the New Testament as being the gift of Someone who loves them, and who has said that His is a love that will never change. As I repeat this old, old truth once again, in all reverence I quote the words of the faded valentine:

> This little tribute which I send,
> I hope you will receive,
> And keep it for the sake of One
> Who never will deceive.

LOVE'S GIFT.

She hath done what she could.—Mark xiv. 8.

To-day I am not going to give you a text, but I am going to tell you three stories, and after you have heard them I shall ask you to find the text yourselves.

The first story is about something that happened a year or two ago. It happened at Charing Cross Station in London.

One cold spring day a train of wounded was arriving from France and a crowd gathered to watch the soldiers being helped to the ambulances. In one ambulance four badly wounded men were tenderly laid. They were covered with warm wraps and someone in the crowd placed on the top of these a few golden daffodils. A little ragged barefoot newsboy who had wormed his way to the front of the crowd, as little boys usually do, ran forward as the ambulance moved off, and beside the flowers threw four copies of his evening paper. Then he dived hastily into the mass of onlookers and disappeared from view. But not a few people in that crowd said to themselves our text.

The second story is about something that happened

centuries ago. In fact it comes to us from what people call the Middle Ages.

In those days there lived in France a certain poor juggler who went from town to town, from village to village, and earned his living by doing various tricks. He would spread on the ground a piece of carpet to represent a platform, then he would make a little speech, and then he would do marvellous balancing feats with a tin plate, some knives, and six copper balls.

Now it chanced one day that the poor juggler fell in with a worthy monk, and the monk told the juggler about Jesus Christ and how he and his brother monks lived only to praise and serve Him. As the juggler listened he felt that he also would fain serve the Christ, so he went with the monk to the monastery, donned a friar's robe and hood, and became a brother. They gave him the name of Brother Amicus, which just means "friend."

Now, as time passed, one thing greatly grieved Brother Amicus. It was this—all the brothers were able to do something to the praise and glory of God. One could write beautiful thoughts, another could paint exquisite letters on vellum, a third could sing like an angel, and a fourth could carve lovely white images of Christ. All could do something—all except Brother Amicus.

Then one day he heard our text, and an idea came to him, and as he thought of it his face, which had been sad, shone with happiness. Day after day it

glowed till the other monks could not help but notice it. They noticed, too, that he spent much of his time in the chapel of the monastery. At last they set themselves to watch, and what do you think they saw? This:—Brother Amicus with his juggler's dress and his old piece of carpet, and his plate and knives and balls juggling, more wonderfully than he had ever juggled to man, in front of the great white statue of Christ. The balls tossed and the knives flashed, and Amicus bent and twisted himself till beads of perspiration stood out on his brow.

The watching monks were horror-stricken and would have rushed forward to stop such an exhibition in the holy place, but the story tells that just as they were going to do so the figure of Christ stooped forward and gently wiped the perspiration from the juggler's brow. Christ had seen only the yearning love in the heart of His humble servant.

The third story carries us back nineteen hundred years.

The people of a certain little Eastern village had made a feast in honour of a great Physician who was passing through their village. They had made the feast to show their gratitude to the great Healer for the many wonderful things He had done in their midst. He had come to their village many times, and every time He had come He had given them cause to bless Him. But this feast was to celebrate a specially wonderful deed of His. Shortly before this, one of the

chief men of the village, an intimate friend of the Physician, had fallen ill. They had sent urgent messages to the Healer that His friend was at death's door, but before He had arrived the sick man was dead. He was even buried. Then the Physician had worked a miracle more miraculous than any He had worked before. He had gone to the grave of the dead man, and at His call the dead man had come forth from the tomb restored to life and health. No wonder that the village wanted to honour such a Healer!

The feast was held in the house of another patient of the great Physician—one Simon, whom He had cured of leprosy. Everybody was vying with everybody else to show the Miracle-Worker how grateful they were for His kindness. It was a splendid feast. The man who had been brought back from the dead was there. So was his elder sister. She was helping to serve at table. But his younger sister did not come into the room till the middle of the meal, and when she came in she did what we in this country would consider a very strange thing. She walked over to the couch on which the great Physician reclined (for in these days they did not sit up at table as we do), and taking from the folds of her dress a beautiful flask of costly perfume, she broke it and poured the perfume on the head and feet of Him who had given her back her brother. And so sweet was the perfume that the whole house was filled with the odour.

Now, anointing with perfume was supposed to be a very special way of showing homage and honour in the

East, but so costly was this perfume that some of the guests shook their heads and said to each other, "What a waste! Just think what a lot of money that flask would have brought had it been sold! Why, it would have bought a dinner for hundreds of poor people!"

But the great Physician Himself did not say, "What a waste!" He saw the love that lay behind the gift. He saw that the woman wished to give Him the best she had to offer. So when the people murmured He rebuked them and said—the words of our text.

For this third story is a Bible story, dear children, and you will find it told in three of the books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, and John. These all tell the same story, but each gives us a little bit of information that the others leave out. It is Mark only who gives us the sentence that fits our other two stories of to-day.

Do you think you can find that sentence? It consists of six words. Two of them are three letters long, three are four letters long, and the longest has only five letters. I think almost the tiniest child here could read that sentence.

Look for it, boys and girls, and when you have found it think over it well and say to yourselves, "I should like Jesus to say that of me." I too should like Him to say it of each of you. But remember that you don't need to do any very brilliant or any very wonderful thing to win that reward. You merely need to do —but there!—I was almost giving away the text!

BEARING CHRIST'S CROSS.

And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross.—Mark xv. 21.

Away in North-East Africa there was a large and beautiful city called Cyrene. The inhabitants of that city were largely Jews who had left their own land on account of the heavy taxes in Syria. Although they were so far from their native soil these Jews never forgot their homeland. Their great desire was that they might one day travel to the sacred city of Jerusalem and take part in the Feast of the Passover.

Among these Jews in Cyrene was a man named Simon. For years this man had been saving his money to go to the great Feast. At last he had gathered enough, and one morning he said "Good-bye" to his wife and two little boys, Alexander and Rufus, and set out on the great journey. Many weary miles did he travel, until at length he reached the city of his desire.

Now at the time of the Passover Jerusalem was always very crowded, for many Jews from the countries round about came to the Holy City to take part in the Feast. When Simon arrived he found there were no

rooms to be had in the city, and he was obliged to find lodgings in one of the little villages near. From there he went in and out to Jerusalem every day.

On the morning of the Day of Preparation for the Sabbath he set out as usual to go to Jerusalem. His heart was filled with peace and thanksgiving. And he praised God for having brought him to that day, for having granted that he should take part in the blessed Feast in the Holy City.

As he approached the gates of Jerusalem a sound arrested him. In the distance it was like the roaring of an angry sea, but as he came nearer he distinguished the cries of an infuriated mob. When he reached the gate the crowd surged through, and he stood aside to let them pass. A crucifixion was evidently about to take place on the hill outside the city. Here were the Roman soldiers accompanying the criminals, here were the Jewish rabble who were always present on such occasions. But why should the priests and scribes also be among the crowd—these men who usually scorned to lower themselves by taking part in such a scene?

Then among the jeering crowd he descried the victims, each one carrying his own cross and escorted by four Roman soldiers. The first two were men on whose faces sin had placed its stamp; but the third bore on His countenance the marks of such patient suffering, such Divine love, that the heart of Simon was moved with compassion. On Him the mob seemed to vent all their hatred. The rabble mocked, the

soldiers jeered. And just as He passed Simon He fell fainting under the weight of the cross.

Here was a predicament for the centurion who commanded the soldiers. It was customary to make criminals carry their own cross, but this man was evidently unable to carry His any farther. Who then was to be pressed into the service? Not any of his own soldiers certainly: they would look upon it as an unspeakable disgrace. Not any of the Jewish mob: they would regard it as an insult of the last degree, and there would certainly be a riot in consequence. Ah, here was the very man on the outskirts of the crowd —a stalwart man, and a stranger to the place. There would be no trouble with him.

So Simon of Cyrene found himself seized by the soldiers, and he had to submit to the awful degradation of bearing a cross. How bitter his thoughts were as he toiled up that hill after Jesus. Here was he—an honest, honourable man—forced to undergo this terrible disgrace! The crowd, delighted to find an additional object for their jests, were already mocking him; his friends would undoubtedly come to hear of the insult; he would be a marked man for life. Oh, the shame of it!

And then something wonderful happened. Jesus looked on him. It was a look of Divine gratitude and compassion, and it made all the difference. In later years Simon would think of that hour as the dearest in his life, the hour of his greatest privilege and highest honour. For it is almost certain that he became a

follower of Christ; and we are told that his two boys, Alexander and Rufus, grew up to be much respected Christians in the church at Rome, and that his wife was as a mother to St. Paul.

Now, boys and girls, some of us are inclined to envy Simon of Cyrene. We should like to have been in his place that day, to have helped to lift the load off Christ's weary shoulders, to have received His look of love. Well, we cannot go back to Calvary with Jesus, we cannot climb that "green hill far away," but we can still help Him to bear His cross, if we will. How can we do it?

The monks at Roncevaux in France have a curious custom. At dawn on the morning of Good Friday a long procession issues out of the abbey gates, each man bearing a heavy wooden cross in imitation of Christ's cross-bearing to Calvary. Through the villages and hamlets they pass, choosing the roughest and steepest roads, until at last they reach the abbey gates again.

Do you think that is really helping Jesus to bear His cross? No, He has shown us a better way.

For we can bear Christ's cross in bearing *our own cross.* What is your particular cross? What is it that you find difficult to do or to bear?

Perhaps it is your lessons. You are not very clever, and sometimes lessons are a great trouble. You grow weary of them and are tempted to skip them or skim them. Well, when you are bravely endeavouring to learn lessons that you don't like, you are bearing a

little bit of Christ's cross and winning a victory over yourself at the same time.

Perhaps your cross is a little ache or a little pain. When you are bearing your little ailments or your little cuts and bruises cheerfully and quietly you are helping to lift a tiny bit of Christ's cross.

Perhaps your cross is being poor. You are not so well off as others, and you are inclined at times to feel a little vexed because you have not so many pennies to spend, or so many nice things to wear. When you are putting these discontented thoughts behind you, and trying to make the best of things as they are, you are bearing a little of Jesus' heavy load.

But even more—we can bear Christ's cross by helping to bear *the cross of others.*

For Jesus is still bearing His cross. He is suffering with and for everyone who is sad, or sorry, or sick, or sinful, or in trouble. And we can bear His cross by cheering the sad and the sick, by comforting the sorrowing, by helping the bad people to be good.

Shall I tell you how two boys I knew bore the cross of another?

One was quite a small boy—about eight years old—and he was full of fun, and fond of all sorts of games and mischief. He had no brothers and only one grown-up sister, but next door lived a family of jolly children with whom he often played. All these children were strong and healthy except one little girl. Somehow or other Ruth's spine had been injured, and she was obliged to lie constantly on her back.

Now that small boy in his play never forgot the little invalid girl. He planned that, somehow or other, she was always brought into the game. If it were "hide and seek," Ruth must be the "den"; if it were cricket, her couch must be drawn to a place of vantage and she must act umpire.

The other boy was quite big—about fourteen or fifteen. The teacher of his class in school noticed that he always came into the room after the others. One day he discovered the reason. In the class was a lame boy who had lost his leg through accident, and the boy who was last always waited to help this unfortunate friend upstairs.

Later that boy entered the navy and became a hero. He risked his life in a wild sea to rescue people off a burning vessel, and his brave deed was known the world over.

Do your little bit, then, as you can, and where you are, to make things brighter and better for those who need your help. Then you too, with Simon of Cyrene, will be bearing Christ's cross.

WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING.

They were both righteous before God.—Luke i. 6.

If you were given a text and asked to make a little sermon from it—a real sermon, out of your own experience—I wonder how you would begin, and what sort of things you would say.

Once I nearly asked a boy to give me ideas for a short sermon. His name was Jim, and he was in a Sunday-school class that I happened to be teaching. The lesson was about Zacharias and Elisabeth, as it is given in the first chapter of Luke. When we came to the verse, "And they were both righteous before God," I put the question to the class, "What does that mean?" Jim at once answered, "Please, they were good when nobody was lookin'." I should have liked to get a few more of Jim's ideas about your text.

Speaking of this text a minister would naturally like to say something about the delightful old couple who lived in a quiet home away among the hills, and who got their religion from the Old Testament. Jim, on the other hand, would possibly have dropped Zacharias and Elisabeth altogether and spoken about "straight chaps." Further, he would almost certainly have said something to this effect: "The right thing

is to fear nobody and tell the truth, even if you get a black eye for the telling of it."

I think Jim's interpretation of the text is a very good one indeed, especially for boys and girls. You believe that truth will prevail. You know that the men who have done great and good work in the world were *straight* if they were anything.

You have all heard of President Lincoln, and what he did for the American people in bringing them through their great civil war. He was only a poor lad, but he was very clever. That, however, would not have helped him through his difficulties. It was his righteousness. He was good when nobody was looking. For a long time he had but few friends; but he held on, sustained by his good conscience and his faith in God; and in course of time he heard "hisses turned to cheers, the taunts turned to tribute, the abuse to praise." He never altered his course, and at his death the whole world mourned his loss. *Punch*, who at one time had ridiculed this man of the people, printed some verses about him. I shall just quote two lines:

> Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
> To lame my pencil, and confute my pen.

President Lincoln was one of the world's righteous men—one of its heroes, one who was good through and through.

Some little time ago there was sold in America a certain famous cup. It was a cup which the German

Kaiser had presented to the winner of a yacht race across the Atlantic. The cup was sold by the owner on behalf of the Red Cross. It was supposed to be of solid gold and was valued at over £1000. It was publicly broken in pieces at New York, and what do you think they found? That the much-vaunted solid gold cup was made of common pewter with a thin gold plating, and was worth only £10! It was a sham at heart.

Boys and girls, those who are good when nobody is looking can stand the test of breaking up. There is nothing sham about them. They are solid gold all through.

WHAT WILL *YOU* BE?

What then shall this child be?—Luke i. 66.

RATHER more than four hundred years ago there was a schoolmaster in a little town in Saxony who every morning, on entering his class, took off his cap to his boys. One day somebody asked the schoolmaster why he so honoured his scholars. He replied, "I am saluting the great generals or statesmen or preachers or benefactors of mankind whom these boys may some day become." And the old master was justified in his faith, for one of these boys grew up to be Martin Luther, the great reformer of our religion.

Nineteen hundred years ago a boy was born in a hill-town of Judæa, and such wonderful signs were given at the time of his birth that all the people in the countryside marvelled and said, "What then shall this child be?" They were sure that some great future lay before him, that God had some strange and special work for him to do. And so it was. For the boy grew up to be John the Baptist, the fore-runner of Christ, who went before Him to prepare His way.

Now the question that was asked about John the Baptist is still being asked to-day. "What then shall

this child be?" And it is being asked about you. Your parents are asking it; your teachers and friends are asking it; your country is asking it; God Himself is asking it. You alone can give the answer.

"What then shall this child be?" It means much more than what career will you follow—will you be a lawyer, or a doctor, or an engineer? will you be a nurse, or a teacher, or the maker of a home? It means much more than will you be rich and famous? will you be witty or beautiful? It means will you be great in the best sense? Will you be noble and pure, unselfish and true; or will you be hard and selfish, lazy and pleasure-loving? In every one of you there lie two tremendous possibilities—to make your life "one grand sweet song" or to make it a dismal failure.

There is a story told of a successful business man, a man who had grown hard and unfeeling in the pursuit of money. One evening this old man was sitting alone after dinner nodding over his wine, when a servant entered carrying a visitor's card on a tray. Before the merchant had time to read the name the visitor followed the servant into the room. The stranger shook hands as if he were an old friend, and the merchant felt sure he had known him before. They sat down and had a talk about old times, and soon the business man discovered that his visitor knew all about his boyhood's hopes and ambitions. Then the stranger said that he had married a woman whom the merchant had himself loved and had given up for the sake of

making money. He added that his wife and daughter were living quite near, and he invited the old man to spend the evening with them. The merchant accepted the invitation and he passed the happiest evening he had spent since the days of his youth. He discovered that his friend was a famous literary man whose books he had omitted to read in the rush to make money. At the close of the evening the visitor accompanied him home and left him in the room where he had first appeared to him. As he was saying good-bye he pointed to the name on the card which was still lying on the table. It was the merchant's own name, and as the visitor vanished through the door he said, "I am the man you might have been." Then the old man awoke and found it was a dream.

Boys and girls, life lies before you, and it is yours to choose which way you will take—the way of self, or the way of God, which is the way of love and service. "What then shall this child be?" You and you alone can decide that matter. Even God can't do anything unless you let Him. But there is one thing certain. You will never be the best unless you are working with and for God, unless you are letting Him direct all your paths, letting Him rule in your life and heart.

It is told of Earl Cairns, a great lawyer and Member of Parliament, that when he was a little boy someone said these words to him, "God claims you." The words made a deep impression, and he went to ask his mother about them. Her answer was, "What are you going to do with the claim?" He replied, "I shall

own it, and give myself to Him." And all through his schooldays and his college days and his career in Parliament these words remained his motto.

Boys and girls, God claims you too. What are you going to do with the claim?

BETHLEHEM.

The city of David, which is called Bethlehem.—Luke ii. 4.

THERE is no place in the Bible better known to you than Bethlehem. It is the first place you learn about, because it is the place where Christ was born. But, though that is long ago, Bethlehem even then had had a long, long history. For thousands of years there has been a village on this spot. There was one in the time of Jacob, but in those days it was called not Bethlehem but Ephrath. There are four stories about Bethlehem in the Bible.

1. The first is the story of how Rachel, Jacob's dearly-loved wife, died when she was near Bethlehem. You remember how Jacob mourned for her, and how he set up a pillar over her grave. There is still a place near Bethlehem which is called Rachel's grave. The pillar which marked it is gone; but in its stead is a tomb built by the Saracens. When General Allenby's victorious army took possession of Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, special guards were sent to watch over Bethlehem and Rachel's tomb.

2. The second story is the story of Ruth. You all remember how Ruth would not leave her mother-in-

law, Naomi; how she gleaned in the fields at Bethlehem; and how she married Boaz, the kind farmer who owned the fields in which she gleaned. You remember how she and Boaz and Naomi all lived happily together in Bethlehem, and how by and by Ruth had a baby whom she called Obed. This child grew up and had a son named Jesse.

3. That brings us to the third story, for Jesse had eight sons and the youngest of them was David, the shepherd boy who became King of Israel.

David was, like all the natives of Bethlehem, a splendid sturdy man. People who know about such things say that there is something about the water in Bethlehem which makes its natives hardy and fearless. That is perhaps why so many of them are shepherds. The shepherds in Palestine have to be brave men. They have so often to risk their lives defending their sheep. David's mightiest captain, Joab, also came from Bethlehem. It was for the clear cool water of the well at Bethlehem that David longed when he was beset by King Saul and his enemies. And you all know the beautiful story of how three of his brave followers overheard David's longing, and how they risked their lives to bring him a draught of the water for which he thirsted. You remember how, when they brought David the pitcher, he felt that the water was too precious to drink, and poured it out instead as an offering to God.

4. The last and best story about Bethlehem is in the New Testament. You know it so well that I need not

repeat it. The shepherds and the angels, the inn, and the Baby who was Christ the Lord—you have known and loved them since you were tiny mites. That story is not only the best story about Bethlehem, it is the best and most wonderful story in all the world.

Wouldn't you like to go and see the place where all these things happened, the town where Christ was born? Perhaps you may some day. Who knows? Shall I tell you what Bethlehem looks like to-day?

It stands to-day where it stood in the days of Ruth, on the top of a grey chalky ridge of hills. The side of the hill is cut into terraces, built up with walls, to keep the earth from falling down. These terraces are planted with vines and olive trees, fig trees and almonds. You may look down over the fields where Boaz walked among his reapers, and Ruth gleaned after them; where David tended his sheep and threw stones with his sling; and where the glory fell on the shepherds watching by night. And far away in the distance you may see the blue mountains of Moab from which Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem.

The streets of the town are narrow. The flat-roofed houses are built round courtyards, and they have few windows to the street. The shops are merely arches without doors or windows, and in them the people carve ornaments of olive-wood or mother-of-pearl to sell to visitors.

A great many visitors come to Bethlehem to see Christ's birthplace. A church called the Church of

the Nativity is built over what is supposed to be the spot. Its roof is made of English oak sent by Edward IV. of England. Underneath it is a cave with a silver star in the floor which is said to be the stable in which Christ was born.

We cannot be certain of the exact spot, but St. Jerome, that good old monk who died in the year 419 A.D., lived the last thirty years of his life in a cave close by. You may still see his cave where he translated the whole of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Latin. That translation is what is known as the Vulgate. Some day, when you grow a little older, you may read it, and when you are reading it, you can think that it was written as nearly as possible on one of the most sacred spots on earth—the place where the Messiah it promised, the Saviour that was to be, came at last to the world.

NO ROOM IN THE INN.

There was no room for them in the inn.—Luke ii. 7.

Not long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa there went out an order from Cæsar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, that a census of his subjects should be taken. Now at that time Palestine was under Roman rule, so the people of Palestine were obliged to enrol themselves according to Cæsar's command. Some of you know what a census means in this country. Every ten years the head of each household receives a paper which he has to fill up. He must tell the number of people living in his house, their age, and, if they are old enough to work, what their trade or business is. In that way we are able to find out how many people there are living in our country.

The census of Cæsar Augustus in Palestine differed in some ways from ours. The head of each family, instead of giving in his name at his own home, was obliged to enrol himself at the native town of his family or clan. And thus it came about that Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, went to Bethlehem with Mary, because, although they were humble folk, they were

both descended from King David, and David, you know, belonged to Bethlehem.

It must have been a long, weary journey for them—nearly eighty miles. I am sure they were very glad when Bethlehem came in sight, and I am sure they were even more glad when they arrived there and began to climb the steep village street. But imagine their dismay when they found that the inn was crowded to the door and that there was no room for them there! The town was filled with Jews who had come for the same reason as they had, but who had had the good fortune to arrive earlier. No one was willing to give up their shelter for such humble folk, however tired they might be. And so they were turned away from the inn.

Then Joseph bethought him of the stable. It was only a rude cave hewn out of the hillside, where the travellers put up their oxen and their asses, but it was better than nothing. It would afford them rest and shelter.

You all know what happened that night while Bethlehem slept. The Lord of life came to earth; the King of Heaven was born; and no one knew of it except Mary and Joseph and a few humble shepherds under the cold stars. And because there was no room in the inn, He to whom all the earth belonged was cradled in a manger. Many a royal baby that night lay on soft pillows, but the Prince of Peace slept

in a cold stable. There was no room for Him in the inn.

And so it was all through His life. There was no room for Jesus in the world. The Jews refused to receive Him as their Messiah. When He preached at Nazareth, where He had been brought up, the people cast Him out of their city and led Him to the brow of the hill that they might throw Him down headlong. Often He had nowhere to lay His head, and in the end the priests and scribes put Him to death so that the world might be rid of Him.

There was no room for Jesus in the inn. How gladly we should have given Him a room in our house that night, and a soft pillow for His tiny head. But Jesus no longer requires a house to shelter Him. He is no longer weary. He no longer hungers or thirsts. Yet the Babe that was born at Bethlehem is still seeking for room—for room in the hearts of men and women, and boys and girls.

Once a preacher spoke to two little black Zulu boys away in South Africa and told them about Jesus and His love. One of them went home to his mistress, and when she asked him what he had heard, he said, "Oh, it was about a wonderful Man. The people were very unkind to Him, and He died and went up to heaven; but He came down again and was like a little child in people's hearts."

Then the lady said, "Well, and what did you do?" With shining face the boy replied, "I opened my

heart and let the little Child Christ come in; and He came in, and my heart closed over Him, and He is safe inside."

Boys and girls, there was no room for Jesus in the inn. Is there any room for Him in your heart?

A GREAT AWAKENING.

Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?—Luke ii. 49.

MANY of you boys and girls have sat in the gallery of the church on a Communion Sabbath. You thought there was something strangely solemn about the service. You could not quite explain it to yourself, but it seemed like no other meeting you had ever attended. You caught a glimpse of several people you knew; they were seated at the communion table. But you could not keep your eyes off someone who was just a few years older than yourself; he was quite lately in one of the upper classes at school. You felt somehow as if you would be afraid to speak to him on Monday. You wondered too if, after a few years, you yourself would be sitting there, and if then you would feel as solemn as you believed he did.

To-day I want to speak to you about Jesus Christ at the age when He began to understand about His mission on earth, and His Father in Heaven. He had just passed His twelfth birthday, but He was regarded as a child no longer. He was a man—not a grown man exactly, but a youth. At that age a Jewish

boy became a member of the congregation and had to attend the services and observe the fasts. But what would please Jesus more than anything was the fact that He could now join His parents in going up to Jerusalem to the three great national and religious feasts. He had never been there. To a Jewish boy Jerusalem would seem as big as London or Glasgow seems to you; and it was just about as far from Nazareth, where Jesus lived, as Dundee is from Aberdeen, or London is from Southampton. How He would look forward to going to the great city for the first time!

The feast of the Passover was held in April, when all Palestine was glorious with lovely spring flowers. The air was scented with their fragrance, and the birds sang in pure joy. The main roads leading to Jerusalem were crowded with people all going on the same errand. Many walked, some rode, and the numbers constantly increased as the city was approached.

Old people could tell you of great open-air meetings that were held in Scotland in the early sixties of last century. Boys and girls were among the crowds that gathered together from all parts of the country to attend them. Family parties walked long distances from outlying country districts, and as they went along they sang revival hymns together. But on the road to Jerusalem those devout Jews sang the noble Psalms of David. One company would start with a verse, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," and another would continue, "I was

glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Don't you think you would have liked to join them?

Jerusalem would seem very beautiful to Jesus when it first burst upon His sight. But after He had seen the Temple He would have eyes for nothing else in the city. He knew there were men in the Temple who lived wonderful lives; they sought knowledge continually. He was sure that God was with them all day and always.

The time passed so quickly that, before He knew it, the day for returning had come. The women and children usually set out first, so Joseph and Mary started, each thinking that their boy was in the company of the other. But after a time they discovered that Jesus was missing. Had no one seen Him? "Have you seen my son?" they kept asking. They sought and sought Him, but in vain. Back to the city they went. Through one street after another they wandered, still with the same question. At last they ventured into the Temple, and there, in a chamber adjoining one of the main courts, Mary caught sight of Jesus. He was sitting in the midst of the wise men listening to them and asking them questions.

Doubtless many questions had occurred to the Boy in the little home at Nazareth. Here, as He listened to these men who gave up their time to the acquiring of knowledge, there came a sudden feeling of being

lifted up above this world; His pure soul was filled with a great joy. He felt God was His Father. He knew now that he was in reality the Son of God. He could not move; He sat on. To His mother who chided Him because He had lingered and had made it necessary for both Joseph and her to return there came the surprised reply—the only saying of Jesus' boyhood that we have. "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" It was as if He said, "Did you not know, Mother? I was bound to be in God my Father's House."

But although Christ had awakened to feel that He was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World, He went back to Nazareth and was subject unto His parents.

Jesus came into the world to teach boys and girls how to live, to tell them that they, too, are sons and daughters of God. And He is one of whom you can make a Friend; for He lived your life, at home, at school. He knows your difficulties and temptations, and He can help you to become worthy sons and daughters of the Great Father.

SYNAGOGUES.

He taught in their synagogues.—Luke iv. 15.

We often read in the Gospels about synagogues. Perhaps you would like to know what kind of place the synagogue was.

Among the Jews the synagogue took the place of our church. There was only one Temple in Palestine, the beautiful building in Jerusalem. Only there could sacrifices be offered by the priests. But the people who did not live in Jerusalem, and who were sometimes a long way from it, could go there only once, or at most a few times, in the year. They made the journey on foot or riding on asses; and it was slow and dangerous because the roads were bad and infested with robbers. So in every town and village of any size there was a synagogue where the people gathered on the Sabbath to worship. A service could not be held for fewer than ten men (women did not count), therefore, before a synagogue could be built, ten men who could always be present had to promise that they would be there every Sabbath to make a congregation.

The synagogue was a large hall, sometimes divided into aisles by pillars. The most important piece of furniture was the cupboard, which stood at one end, and in which the sacred books were kept. This was

the holiest part of the synagogue, and it was treated with great reverence. A curtain hung in front of it, and before the beginning of the Sabbath—that is on Friday evening—a canopy was spread over the top of it. In this cupboard were the books of the Old Testament. They were written on long, narrow rolls of skin. The writing was in columns across the roll, and when the reader wished to find any particular passage he unrolled the roll from the one end, and rolled it up at the other. The Scriptures were treated with great reverence by the Jews, and when these rolls were not in use they were wrapped in fine embroidered cloths to which little bells were fastened.

The congregation sat on benches, and the Scribes and elders sat in front in the best places, with their faces to the rest of the people. Jesus once said of the Scribes and Pharisees that they loved the chief seats in the synagogues, and He told His disciples not to be like them.

In the middle of the synagogue, or at one end, there was a raised platform with a reading-desk, from which the Scriptures were read. There was no priest or minister. The service was conducted by the most learned men present, generally the Scribes, who were the great students and teachers of the Bible.

Then there was a man called the ruler of the synagogue. He kept order, and decided who was to take part in the service. Jairus, the father of the little girl whom Jesus raised from the dead, was a "ruler of the synagogue."

There was also an attendant called the *chazzan*. He was rather like our church officer. Every Friday he arranged the lamps, and made ready for the Sabbath. The preparation had all to be done, and the lamps lit, before the Sabbath began. It began at sunset on Friday night, and when the time came, the *chazzan* went up to the roof of the synagogue and blew loudly three times on a trumpet. Immediately all work stopped. The *chazzan* was a Scribe, and sometimes he read or preached himself, or led the prayers. He took care of the holy books, and at the proper time in the service he took out the roll and handed it to the person who was to read. Afterwards he wrapped it up and put it away again.

Now, when the congregation had gathered in the synagogue on the Sabbath, what did they do? What kind of service did Jesus go to? First, they all repeated together what they called the *Shema*, three short portions of Scripture, beginning with the words, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." You may find the portions in Deut. vi. 4–9, xi. 13–21, and Num. xv. 37–41. These were said aloud by everybody.

Next, a number of prayers were said by one person, and all the others said, "Amen." During the prayers the people turned towards Jerusalem and stood with their heads covered.

After the prayers came the reading. First there

was a lesson from the Law—that is, the first five books of the Bible. It was read by seven people, each one reading a little bit. Then the *chazzan* took back that roll and brought another, and someone was asked to read a portion from one of the prophets, and as he carried the rolls the people bent forward and kissed them to show their love for the Bible. By the time of Christ the language of the people in Palestine had changed very much from the Hebrew in which the Bible was written, so much so that they needed to have it explained to them. So when the Bible was read in the synagogue, someone, very often the schoolmaster, who understood Hebrew, explained it in the common speech in order that everyone might understand.

Last of all someone was invited to give a sermon. It was the custom to ask any learned stranger who was present to do this, and he preached, or "taught," sitting.

But the synagogue was the school as well as the church. Jewish boys went to school at six, and stayed till they were about thirteen. They learned reading and writing and arithmetic and, most of all, the Bible. They learned the laws of their religion, and the history of their people, and all the Bible stories in the Old Testament—the stories of Jacob, and Joseph, and David. They learned a great deal by heart, sitting on the floor round their teacher's chair, and repeating the lesson all together in a loud voice.

It was the custom of Jesus on His journeys to go into the synagogues of the towns He visited. There

He taught the people, and there sick people were brought to Him that He might heal them. He must have been in a great many synagogues, but there are two in particular about which we are told.

One was the synagogue of Nazareth, where He was brought up. After He had begun His public work He came back and spoke in this synagogue, and told the people that the prophecy of the Saviour they were expecting was fulfilled in Him. When they heard Him say that He was that Saviour, they rushed upon Him and took Him to the top of a high cliff to throw Him over, but He escaped from them.

The other synagogue was that of Capernaum, where He lived a great deal. It was very beautiful. Built of pure white stone like marble, it had a porch, and marble steps led up to it. It was built for the Jews by a Roman soldier (a centurion) who "loved their nation." This was the centurion whose servant was sick, and who begged the Jews to ask Jesus to heal him.

Not long ago some explorers found the ruins of this synagogue buried under the earth. They have cleared away the earth, and are building up the stones and setting up the pillars. When it is finished we shall see the synagogue as it was when Christ lived in Capernaum. All the other buildings of that time have crumbled away, and have been replaced. But we shall see this beautiful synagogue just as Jesus saw it when He worshipped in it on the Sabbath, performed in it His miracles, or preached in it those wonderful sermons which are written in the Gospels.

THE COMPLEAT ANGLER.

They set a trap, they catch men.—Jer. v. 26.
Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.—Luke v. 10.

THERE is a curious fish which inhabits the waters near our coasts. It is called the angler fish, and it has received this name because of the strange way in which it attracts its prey.

The angler fish is generally about three feet in length, and the greater part of its body is made up of its head! Its mouth is a huge chasm containing two long rows of very sharp teeth. But the extraordinary bit about this creature is its back fin. Three of the rays or spines belonging to this fin have grown into long tentacles and have removed from the back to the head. These tentacles the angler fish uses as baits to catch the smaller fishes. When it is ready for a meal it hides its head in the mud or among the sea-weed and waves the tentacles about in the water. They look exactly like three nice tempting worms, and the front ray, which is clubbed at the end, appears specially attractive. Very soon up swims a small fish expecting a nice dinner. Of course it never sees the huge mouth, for not even the silliest of silly little fishes would walk open-eyed into that trap. But just

when it is upon the point of seizing the supposed worm there is a vicious snap, and the poor little victim is engulfed in the vast cavern.

The sailors sometimes call the angler fish the "sea-devil," and don't you think it is a good name? For when the devil wants to get hold of a man or a woman, when he wants to capture a boy or a girl, he doesn't do it openly; he sets a trap. He knows that if his intended victims saw what an ugly, cruel, horrible old wretch he was he would never catch them at all, so he hides himself and dangles an attractive bait in front of their eyes.

That is why the things that lead us astray often seem so nice. We are so taken up looking at the attractive side of them that we forget where they are leading us until we find that we have wandered far away from the things that we knew to be right and true.

It is well for us that the devil is not the only angler. There is another greater than he, and He draws us, not with any deceitful bait but with the cords of infinite love. Christ is the great Master Fisher and He seeks to catch us, not that He may destroy us, but that He may fill us fuller with life.

There is one other thing I want you to think about. You and I, boys and girls, whether we know it or not, are angling either on the side of Jesus or on the side of the devil.

Our first text was addressed to the people of Judah

and Israel. They were told that among them were wicked men who set a trap and caught men. These wicked men were really servants of Satan. They caught others to destroy them.

Our second text is taken from the story of the miraculous draught of fishes. You remember how Jesus stood one morning by the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret, and He saw two fishing-boats lying there, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets a little distance off. He entered one of the boats and told the owners to launch out into the deep and let down their net for a draught. The skipper, Simon Peter, replied that they had toiled all night and caught nothing, but nevertheless because Jesus told them to do it they would let down the net. And when they obeyed they enclosed such a multitude of fishes that their net broke and they had to call in the help of their partners in the other ship. Not only that, but so great was the weight of their catch that both ships began to sink.

When Peter saw it he fell down at Jesus' feet and cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." And Jesus said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

If you looked up that word "catch" in the Greek New Testament you would see that it means "take alive" or "save alive." That is what Jesus is doing, and that is what His true followers are doing too by His help.

For, boys and girls, if you are not on Jesus' side, if

you are not on the side of the things that are noble and right, then, consciously or unconsciously, you are helping to draw others into the devil's trap. But if you are faithfully trying to follow Jesus and to do what He would have you do, then by your influence and example, by your kind words and your loving deeds, you are helping to catch men alive that they may be filled with fuller life.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.—Luke vi. 31.

Boys and girls, did it ever strike you that we have all to live beside each other, and that if things are to go smoothly we must observe certain rules? Young people nowadays are trained to do all sorts of things —to play in orchestras—often with very fine results—to use tools, to manage horses, to control fire and even lightning. That is all very good and interesting; but surely it is more important that you should learn how to manage other boys and girls—learn, in fact, how to live beside them. You have brothers and sisters, schoolfellows, playfellows. How do you behave towards them?

"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." These words uttered by Jesus Christ tell us that He had thought a good deal about the behaviour of people to one another. They are "wise words," and have been named the Golden Rule.

You have heard of an "unwritten law," haven't you? The Golden Rule is one of those acknowledged at most of our great public schools, and, when honestly acted up to, it results in a very fine type of boy. Occasion-

ally, however, a mere caricature of it is found to be the standard of school behaviour. You boys must have heard something like this—"If you will back me up, I'll do the same to you." That is no Golden Rule, is it?

You will notice it is not how your neighbours behave towards you that you are asked to imitate, but how you would *like* them to behave. And that is a difficult thing to do, although at first it seems easy. One really needs the help of God to observe the Golden Rule.

One evening an Indian chief was sitting by the fireside of a friend. They had been silent for a while, each one looking into the fire and thinking his own thoughts. At last the great chief asked his friend what he had been thinking about. "I have been thinking," replied the other, "of something that was once said by the great Founder of the Christian religion, something so beautiful that we call it the Golden Rule."

"Stop," cried the chief; "say no more about its good qualities, but tell me what it is. Then I shall be able to judge for myself whether it be good or not." "Very well," said the friend, "I shall tell you. The rule is that men should do to others what they would wish others to do to them." "That," replied the Indian, "would be impossible." He rose and paced the room for about a quarter of an hour, then he came to a halt before his friend. "I have been thinking of what you have told me," he said. "There is one way, and one

way only in which that rule could be kept. If the Great Spirit who made man were to give him a *new heart*, then it might be done—not otherwise."

Let me tell you of two people who practised this rule.

One was a soldier, the great General Gordon. It was said that he never thought of himself in following his Divine Master. At Khartoum he was loved as a simple Christian man. On one occasion he was installed with a royal salute, and an address was presented to him. In return he was expected to make a speech. His speech was as follows: "With the help of God I will hold the balance level." That was fine, was it not? And in writing to his sister, he said, "Do you want to be loved, respected, and trusted? Then, ignore the likes and dislikes of man in regard to your actions; do to them as you would have them do to you . . . they may despise some things in you, but they will lean on you, and trust you, and God will give you the spirit of comforting them. But try to please men, and ignore God, and you will fail miserably, and get nothing but disappointment."

The second person was a nurse—one who gave her whole life to help sick people. Not only did she care for their bodies, she cared for their souls, she spoke to them about Jesus Christ. When people asked her how she could do so much, she said, "I try to put myself in the place of these poor men, see with their eyes, and feel their wants and difficulties as if they

were my own; and then God puts into my heart the words which will reach their hearts."

Once there was a terrible explosion in the city where she nursed, and many people were brought to her hospital. Somehow she succeeded in putting the right spirit into many of the poor sufferers. "Sister Dora," one of them said, "I want to be dressed *very* bad, but if there's any wants you worse, go to them first."

When Sister Dora died the people wanted to have a statue of her. "We want it," they said, "so that when people ask, 'Who's that?' we shall be able to say, 'Who's that? Why, that's our Sister Dora.'"

One such little "sister" could bring a healthy tone into a whole school. You know how a bright sunny day helps to make the earth beautiful. It is in the power of every boy and girl to bring sunshine—to help their brothers and sisters and companions, and, like Sister Dora, to heal and to make them happy.

Boys and girls, this is the true art of living with each other. Ask God to help you to practise it.

THE RIGHT KIND OF EYES.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?—Luke vi. 41.

I AM going to speak to-day about the right kind of eyes.

You know there are a great many people in the world who have some defect in their eyes, and who cannot see properly. Some of these people are sensible and wear eyeglasses or spectacles which help them to see things in the right way; but many of them do not know that there is anything wrong with their eyes, and they imagine that it is the other people who are seeing wrong. Some people are colour-blind and will tell you that a thing is blue when it is green; some see things larger or smaller than they are; and I once knew an old lady who saw things double! If one boy walked down the street past her window she declared that two boys had gone past, and she got quite cross if anybody contradicted her!

Jesus once preached a sermon about bad eyesight. He said that some people went about trying to pick little motes out of their brother's eye, and all the time they did not seem to know that there was a beam

blurring their own vision. Now what are motes and beams?

A mote is just a little speck of dust, so tiny that you can hardly see it; a beam is a log of wood some inches thick and several feet long, the kind of log that would be used for supporting a floor or the centre of a roof.

Perhaps someone will say, "How could a great big log of wood get into anyone's eye?" Well, that was just a way of speaking in the East. The Rabbis had a saying about a mote and a beam, and so, when Jesus wanted to draw a contrast, He used a picture or parable, as we say, that the people could understand. On another occasion, you remember, He spoke about swallowing a camel, but of course it would be quite impossible to swallow a camel wholesale.

What did Jesus mean when He spoke that parable about motes and beams? He meant that there were many people going about the world picking faults in others, and all the time they were quite unconscious of their own much greater faults. The very fact that they were looking out for other people's faults made them blind to their own.

There are many reasons why we should not pick faults in others. Let me give you three.

1. *We are not perfect ourselves.*—The Indians have a proverb—"Said the sieve to the needle, 'You have a hole in you.'" Just fancy the sieve, riddled with holes, having the impertinence to criticize the needle! Let us make sure that we are not the sieve and the

other boy or girl the needle. It's just a case of the mote and the beam over again, or the pot calling the kettle black.

2. *We do not know enough to judge.*—Once, among a great crowd of people in a French town, a man named La Motte trod upon the foot of another. The man who had been hurt turned round quickly, and aimed a violent blow at La Motte's head. But La Motte said quietly, "Sir, you will surely be sorry for what you have done when you know that I am blind." The man reddened with shame. He had taken La Motte to be a rough and rude fellow. He had judged without knowing, and his judgment had led him to do a mean act.

We may be making just the same kind of mistake about other people. We may be seeing in them faults that they haven't got at all. It is very, very easy to do so. You know how often *you* are blamed for things you never even thought of doing.

3. *Fault-finding does an infinite amount of harm*—it does an infinite amount of harm to others, and it does an infinite amount of harm to ourselves.

It does an infinite amount of harm to others. How many of you like to make a snow man in winter-time? One of the best ways to form the body of the man is to make a little snowball with your hands, and then lay it down on the ground and roll it over and over in the snow. You know what happens. The little snowball grows bigger and bigger until it is big enough to form the body of the man. Now that is just the way with

another's faults when we begin to notice them and speak about them. They grow bigger and bigger in our imagination, until at last they are so big no one would recognize them as the original faults.

And fault-finding does an infinite amount of harm to ourselves. It leaves stains on our own character. We cannot criticize others without becoming a little harder, a little more unkind. It twists our nature until we grow crooked and deformed. It spoils our eyesight until we are able to see only the ugly things about people.

Do you know the story of the man who lived in a room with two windows? One window looked out on a bright flower garden and, beyond that, to a splendid view of moor and river; the other window looked on to an ugly backyard. One day this man invited a friend to see his beautiful view. The friend went to one of the windows and said he did not see anything that he could admire. Can you guess the reason? He was looking out at the wrong window.

If we want to get a beautiful view of things we must look out at the right window, we must look out for the good points in our friends, and not for their failings. It is told of Peter the Great of Russia that when he heard anyone badly spoken of he would say, "Tell me, has he not a bright side?"

"But how," you ask, "am I to see the beam in my own eye? How am I to know that it is there? It is impossible for a person to see his own eye." Just

think a minute. If you wish to see your own eye what do you do? You look in a mirror. And that is just how we are to discover the beam in our eye. We are to look in the mirror of Christ's perfect life. If we look long enough into that mirror we shall see ourselves so black that we shall never again wish to pick faults in others.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

A BRAMBLE BUSH.

A bramble bush.—Luke vi. 44.

I WONDER how many of you have been brambling, or are going to bramble, this autumn? If you haven't brambled, you have missed a great deal of fun. Only you must be properly prepared for your expedition; otherwise the fun may end in tragedy. The best way to get ready is to put on your very oldest clothes and your very shabbiest boots; for brambles have a nasty way of fastening themselves to garments and scratching ugly marks on shoe-leather. When you are properly rigged out, you set off with a tin pail or a basket. You spend a glorious afternoon hunting and scrambling; and you come back at night tired but triumphant, with purple lips and fingers, and with a quantity of splendid fresh air in your lungs.

Now there are one or two things you may have noticed whilst you were a-brambling.

The first is that if you want to be successful you must be prepared to take some trouble and to bear a few scratches. For brambles aren't so easily picked as strawberries. Some of them may be within our reach, but a great many more will be just beyond us, so that we have to push into the bushes, and stand on our tip-

toes, and get our legs pricked and our hands torn. But we don't mind, do we? Not a bit! It's all in the day's fun, and the brambles are worth it even though we do have to get thorns extracted with horrid sharp needles when we go home.

And do you know, boys and girls, that you will find more and more as you grow up that the things that are most worth doing and having are the things that we have to take trouble about? It doesn't matter whether it is a game, or a lesson, or a bit of work: it is the things that we have to make an effort to accomplish that are most worth while in the end, provided of course we are striving after really good things.

Did you ever hear the fable about the Swiss clock that wanted to get rid of its weights? It had ticked away quite cheerfully on the wall, year in, year out, marking the time and striking the hours. But one day it woke with a headache and it began to feel sorry for itself. It complained of the two dreadful weights it had to carry, and it said that it was quite sure it could work much better if these were taken away. Well, the owner of the clock removed the weights, and what do you suppose happened? Why, the clock immediately stopped dead! It could neither mark the time, nor strike the hours, nor tick a single tick without the weights that it fancied were hampering it.

Now sometimes when we have a stiff lesson to prepare, or a difficult bit of work to do, or when we have to practise hard at a game and don't seem to make much progress, we are tempted to think, What is the

good of it all? But it is just these weights that are helping us to get on. By accepting and making use of them we are gaining knowledge, and we are gaining something much more valuable than knowledge. Some people call it character and others call it "grit."

Why, the bramble itself can teach us a lesson in this way, for it "*sticks in*" in order to climb. If it were not for those very prickles that annoy us the bramble would be condemned to sprawl about on the ground. But by the help of its thorns it seizes hold of the branches of sturdier bushes and so lifts itself up into the air and the sunlight which help its growth.

But there is another thing that you may have noticed about the bramble. If you want to find the biggest and juiciest berries you must sometimes stoop. Very often the best are to be found underneath branches quite close to the ground. It may be because the moisture helps the fruit to swell or just that other people have forgotten to look there.

And isn't it just like that in life, boys and girls? Sometimes we find the best people in the lowliest places; often the most beautiful virtues grow in the most lowly soil.

When Ian Maclaren, a great Scottish writer and preacher, was a small boy he went to stay with his uncle in the country. When Sunday came he went to church, and as it was Communion Sunday he sat in the gallery and watched the elders reverently carry round the bread and wine. He was greatly impressed with

one old white-haired man who was dressed all in black and who had a beautiful benevolent face. When he was playing on the road on Monday morning he was surprised to see the same old man, wearing shabby, patched clothes, and breaking stones by the roadside. He ran to ask his uncle about it, and the uncle replied, "Yes, that is old John. He is only a poor old stone-breaker, but he is the most Christlike man in the congregation."

And, boys and girls, by looking for beauty and goodness in unexpected places we are following in the steps of Jesus, who saw good and beauty in the things and the people that others despised.

There is a beautiful old legend which tells how one evening Jesus came to a town where a crowd had gathered round the body of a dead dog. The dog was covered with wounds and besmirched with dirt, for it had been dragged through the streets of the town. The crowd looked upon it with disgust. One remarked upon its torn skin, another drew attention to its bloodstained limbs, and a third pointed to the mud which covered it. Then a stranger said, "Look at his teeth! Are they not whiter than pearls?" And the crowd drew back amazed. Then one among them spoke: "This must be Jesus of Nazareth, for He alone could have seen beauty in a dead dog."

"SAY GRACE."

He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them.—Luke ix. 16.

DID you ever wonder why we "ask a blessing" or "say grace" at meals? A blessing is one of the very first prayers we learn. Indeed, we are usually so tiny at the time that we can't say a grown-up blessing, and are taught a special one of our own made up of short words, such as—

God bless this food,
And make me good.

or just, "Thank God for my good breakfast"; "Thank God for my good dinner."

I once knew a little girl who was so small that she couldn't even speak, but she understood about a blessing. She watched her father and her mother and her older sisters all bending their heads when food was on the table, and she too shut her eyes tight whilst father reverently said grace. One day, about Christmas-time, her mother was preparing the fruit for the plum pudding. The raisins and the currants and the candied peel were laid out on plates on the dining-room table, and just before mother began to stone the raisins she drew Kitty's baby chair up to the table beside her. What was her astonishment when Kitty bent her curly

head, folded her little hands, closed her eyes, and solemnly said something that sounded like "M—m—m" over the fruit for the Christmas pudding!

Yes, saying grace is one of the first things we learn. But do you know it is one of the oldest customs in the world? It is a custom we have borrowed from the Jews. The Jews believed in blessings. They believed in blessing people. They believed in blessing food; and by and by the blessing grew into a thanksgiving to God the Giver. The first blessing of food we read about is in the ninth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. There we are told that the people would not eat of the sacrificial meal till Samuel the prophet had blessed it.

Later in their history the Jews became very particular about grace before and after meat. They had quite a number of rules on the subject. The grace which they said before eating bread was very probably the grace which Christ used when He looked up to heaven and blessed the five loaves and the two fishes before dividing them among the multitude. Would you like to know that blessing? The Bible does not give it us, but other Jewish books do, and here it is: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth."

Besides this grace before meat, there was another to be used before drinking; and there were no fewer than four graces after meat from which to choose. At the feast of the Passover, too, there were special blessings at certain stages of the meal.

The early Christians continued the custom of thanks-

giving at meal-times, and so the practice has been handed down from generation to generation; and although we don't have so many blessings as the Jews had, most of us still thank God before meals, and some of us thank Him after meals as well.

Now, sad to say, there are some people who thank God for His goodness neither before nor after meals. They simply leave God out. These people remind me of the story of the hungry man who was once taken to a hall where plates were laid for no fewer than 1460 persons. The tables were groaning with tempting food of all kinds, and the hungry man felt his teeth water. "Would you like a meal?" asked his guide. "Rather!" replied the man. "May I sit down?" "Not till I have told you something," said the guide. "These plates stand for the meals you have eaten during the last twelve months. There are 365 breakfasts, 365 dinners, 365 teas, and 365 suppers. You see what a lot of food they amount to; yet you have never thanked God for one of them."

But there are others who do thank God for His mercies and then immediately start to grumble right through the meal. "The soup is too hot; the meat is tough; and ugh! they hate milk puddings!"

These people remind me of the little girl who said as grace, "For what we are about to receive, O Lord, make us truly thankful." But until she grew quite big she thought the words were, "For *quarter* about to

receive, O Lord, make us truly thankful." She imagined she was to give thanks for only quarter of what she ate. I'm afraid some of us are not truly thankful even for the quarter.

You have heard of Dr. Paton, the famous missionary to the New Hebrides. At one time there was a famine in the islands, and the natives looked forward eagerly to the arrival of the missionary ship, the *Dayspring*, because it brought food. One morning the vessel arrived, and the stores were unshipped and carried to the storehouse. A group of native children watched the scene, and when all the goods had been packed away they asked Dr. Paton if he had forgotten his promise that they should each have a biscuit. Oh no, he had not forgotten, but he had waited to see if they would remember. Of course they had remembered, and would he please open the cask quickly for they were dying for biscuits.

So Dr. Paton opened the cask and gave each boy and girl a biscuit. To his surprise they all stood round, but not one of them began to eat. He asked them why they were waiting. They had said they were dying for biscuits, and yet nobody was eating. Did they expect another one? Then one of the oldest said, "We shall first thank God for sending us food, and ask Him to bless us all." And so they did, and then they all munched happily God's latest gift.

I somehow think these little black boys and girls could teach their white brothers and sisters a lesson. Don't you?

PASSING ON AND PASSING IT ON.

He passed by on the other side.—Luke x. 31.

I AM going to speak to you this morning about "passing on" and "passing it on." What have these two things to do with each other? If you listen you will find out.

1. First of all we shall think about "*passing on.*"

In St. Luke's Gospel we have a very interesting story, a sort of story of adventure. It is a parable which Jesus told and it is called "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." You know the story. It tells of how a man was going down by that wild, bleak, rocky track that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho. There he was set upon by some of the robbers who infested the mountains. He was stripped of all he possessed and left wounded and half dead by the roadside. By and by a priest came past and then a Levite, but each, in turn, passed by on the other side without doing anything to help the sufferer. At last a Samaritan came along, and when he saw the wounded man he got off his beast and went to his aid. He bound up the wounds, set the man on his own donkey, and brought him to an inn. And when, on

the morrow, he had to continue on his way he left money with the landlord to pay for the visitor's board for several days, and told him that if more was spent he would repay it on his return journey.

Now I don't want to say anything more about the Good Samaritan. He speaks for himself. But I wish to talk about the two men who passed by on the other side. Why did they do it? Well, I don't think it was altogether because they didn't care. I believe they were sorry enough in a way that cost them nothing at all. I fancy they passed on for two reasons. First, because to care for the wounded man would have cost them a good deal of trouble (and money and time into the bargain); and secondly, because it might have exposed them to danger. The robbers were probably not far away, and they might return at any moment and set upon them. No, no, it was too much to risk! So they gathered their skirts about them and hurried on. Fear made them shirk their duty.

You see these men were really selfish. They cared little about anything except their own comfort and safety. I think in some ways they were worse than the robbers. The latter were wild men who had perhaps never had a chance to be good. But the priest and the Levite were ministers of religion. They knew more about what was right and kind than most people, and yet—they passed on.

We are all ready to blame the priest and the Levite,

but are we never like them ourselves? Yes, I think we are. And our reasons are just the same as theirs. It is partly because we won't take trouble, and partly because we are cowards.

We are like them when we join in the laugh against a schoolfellow who is unpopular. We may know that he doesn't deserve to be laughed at, but we laugh because everybody else is doing it and we don't like to be singular. And we are like them when we omit to help a friend in a difficulty. We may be sorry enough for him, but it isn't much good being sorry for people unless we do something practical to help them. The world is filled with thousands of people who mean well. How much happier a place that world would be if all the meaning were turned into doing!

2. So much for "passing on"; and now for "passing it on."

At school we used to play a game in class called "passing it on." I wonder if you still play it? It was rather a silly game, but the fun consisted in playing it without being detected by the master. A boy at one end of the form gave his neighbour a pinch or a nudge with the injunction, "Pass it on." Then the neighbour did the same to *his* neighbour with the same injunction, until the pinch or nudge had gone from one end of the form to the other.

I was reminded of that game the other day when I read a story about a boy who afterwards became a celebrated preacher—Mark Guy Pearse. He was

once going home from school. He had to travel part of the way by steamer, and he was under the impression that the sum of money he had paid for his ticket also included payment for lunch. When the luncheon gong sounded he went down below and had a good tuck in.

Afterwards, just as the boat was reaching its destination, the steward walked up to him and presented him with his bill for lunch. The boy was taken aback. He had spent all his money and had nothing to pay the bill. Then the steward told him that he must leave his luggage behind and give his name and address. But when the man heard the name his face changed. "Shake hands," he said; "I will pay the bill myself for the sake of what your father did for my mother years ago when she was in great trouble." So he paid the boy's bill, gave him five shillings, and saw him safely landed.

When the boy told the story at home, his father said, "My lad, I passed on the kindness to him long ago, and now he has passed it on to you. Mind, as you grow up, to pass it on to others."

Years after, when the boy had grown into a man, he stood one day at the booking office of a railway station waiting for his turn to buy a ticket. In front of him was a small boy who seemed to be in difficulties. He had not quite enough money to purchase his ticket, and the clerk was telling him to move on. The boy offered to send him the extra pence, but again the clerk roughly told him to move on.

Then in a flash the gentleman behind him had a vision of another small boy who had no money to pay his lunch bill, and he heard his father's voice say, "Don't forget the kindness. Pass it on." Immediately he stepped forward and said, "I'll pay the difference. What is it?" And he did pay, and afterwards in the railway carriage he told the boy the story of his own boyhood and of how his father had told him to pass on the kindness. Then he gave the lad the same bit of advice—"Pass it on." And as the train drew out of the station the boy waved his handkerchief out of the window and shouted, "I shan't forget! I'll pass it on!"

Do you wonder why I have told you that story and what it has got to do with the other—the story of the men who passed on?

Well, it's like this. We are all a little like that wounded man by the roadside. We all depend on the help and kindness we receive from others. And so it ill befits us to pass by anyone who is in trouble, anyone we can be kind to, or help.

If you have received kindness from anyone—your parents, or teachers, or neighbours, or friends—pass it on. And don't forget the biggest kindness of all, the kindness we have received from the best of all Friends. Pass on a little of that kindness. If He has forgiven you, forgive others. If He has been patient with you, be patient with them. If He has loved you, love them.

Have you had a kindness shown?
Pass it on;
'Twas not given for thee alone,
Pass it on;
Let it travel down the years,
Let it wipe another's tears,
Till in heav'n the deed appears—
Pass it on.

Did you hear the loving word?
Pass it on;
Like the singing of a bird?
Pass it on;
Let its music live and grow,
Let it cheer another's woe;
You have reaped what others sow—
Pass it on.

'Twas the sunshine of a smile,
Pass it on;
Staying but a little while!
Pass it on;
April beam, the little thing,
Still it makes the flow'rs of spring,
Makes the silent birds to sing—
Pass it on.[1]

[1] Henry Burton.

A DROP OF OIL.

Pouring on them oil.—Luke x. 34.

THAT was what the Good Samaritan did to the poor hurt traveller by the wayside. He poured oil into his wounds. And why did he pour oil on the wounds? It was to soothe them and heal them.

Now I think one of the most splendid bits of work in the world is the work done by doctors and nurses. I think it is a very fine thing to be able to go about the world healing hurt people, making sick people well. But you know there are other hurts in the world besides the hurts of the body, and some of these are harder to bear than any bodily pain. Well, you can all be healers of these hurts, you can all carry a little oil about with you to soothe these wounds.

As I was reading these words, I thought of a special kind of hurt that boys and girls are specially able to heal. What do you think it was? Well, it was the hurt that is caused by strife, and envy, and unkindness.

The Romans of old had a curious belief about the hazel tree. They thought it had the power of bringing

peace and reconciliation; so they burned hazel torches at weddings in order that the new home might be happy and free from quarrels. And the Roman mothers used to bind hazel twigs at the back of their babies' heads so that the little ones might have hazel eyes, because they believed that the people with hazel eyes had a happy, sunny, peace-making nature.

Now your eyes may not be hazel. They may be blue, or grey, or black, but still you may have the happy, sunny nature that makes peace and joy in the home.

For do you know what spoils a home? It isn't the big troubles and sorrows as a rule. It is the little frictions—the little strifes and jealousies, the nasty tempers, the bitter words, the discourteous acts. And those are the things the boys and girls can smooth and heal with their drops of reconciling oil.

Now if you are going to be a healer of wounds there are two "don'ts" and two "do's" you must carry along with you.

And the first "don't" is—Don't repeat any nasty thing that is said to you about another. If anybody should say an unkind thing about another, don't let it go past yourself. The chances are that it is not all true, and even if it were, to repeat it cannot possibly do any good and may do a lot of harm. Those who repeat unkind things are stirrers up of strife, not healers of wounds, so make up your mind to

repeat only the kind and the nice things about others.

The second "don't" is—Don't quarrel yourself. There was a minister once who had charge of a very quarrelsome congregation, and a friend asked him how it was he managed to avoid being drawn into some of the disputes. "Oh," he said, "I always allow the angry person to have the quarrel to himself!" Well, next time somebody wants to quarrel with you, just let him have the quarrel to himself. It is wonderful how short a time it will last. You see there is no fun in being angry with nobody.

And now for the "do's." The first "do" is—Do look on the funny side of things. You know there is a funny side to most things. If you see two people getting rather "ratty" with each other, try the plan of making a joke. When people laugh they forget to be angry. And after all if quarrels were not so serious they would really be very funny; they usually arise out of such trifles.

But the second "do" is the more important, and it is —Do grow a big, loving, sympathetic heart. If you want to heal the wounds of strife and bitterness you must love people and pity them. Jesus carried that heart with Him wherever He went, and He can give it to you, too, if you ask Him.

Boys and girls, will you be healers? Will you pour oil into the wounds of the world? God needs His peacemakers, and there is no grander work you can do.

Will you do this work? You can all do it. And listen. If you will, then you shall earn a beautiful name, a name which Jesus gave to those who poured oil on the wounds of strife. Do you know what it is? Ye shall be called "the children of God."

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

But one thing is needful.—Luke x. 42.

You all know what it is to have special friends. You know how you love to go and see them, and how happy you are when they come to visit you. And you have heard father and mother talking about *their* special friends, and saying how nice it was to have So-and-so "dropping in" of an evening.

Now Christ had special friends too when He lived on earth. There was one house where He knew He could go at any moment and find a welcome. It was the house of two sisters called Martha and Mary. We are told that Jesus "loved" Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. They lived at Bethany, a little village about half an hour's walk from Jerusalem. And in the cool of the evening, after Christ's day's work of preaching and healing was done, He would often walk out to Bethany to refresh Himself by a talk with His friends.

On the evening of which our text tells, Jesus had perhaps taken a few of His disciples with Him, for, when He arrived, there arose a great bustle in the house. Martha, who prided herself on her housekeeping and her cooking, began to rush here and there

and to prepare a great feast in honour of her guests. It was very kind of her, but she did not understand, even although she loved Jesus dearly, that it was not fine food He was hungering for. She never saw that it was the love and sympathy of His friends that He was craving.

But her sister Mary saw. She loved Jesus in a more understanding way than did Martha. She loved Him in a more understanding way than did even His disciples, who were with Him all the time. She saw how He was longing for sympathy and friendship, so she sat down at His feet (as the Jews did at the feet of their rabbis or teachers) and she listened to Him and talked to Him of the things that matter most in the world—God's love for men and men's love for God, and how loving God we love men, and loving men we love God. And perhaps Jesus told her how He had come to show men what God is like, so that it might be easier for men to love God.

In any case, Mary got so absorbed listening and talking to Christ that she was deaf to all the clatter and fuss that Martha was making. She never noticed how hot and tired and cross her sister was growing. But Martha was not too busy to notice Mary. Each time she flew into the room and noisily set extra dishes on the table she gave a look at Mary sitting at the Master's feet; and each time her wrath grew hotter, till at last it boiled over. She bustled up and said sharply to Jesus, "You don't seem to care how busy I am. Don't you see that Mary

should be helping me instead of sitting there doing nothing?"

Jesus looked at poor angry Martha, and then He smiled and shook His head. "Martha, Martha," said He gently, "I'm afraid you are worrying yourself unnecessarily cooking extra dainties for me. Don't you know that I'd rather just share your usual meal? There is no need to make a feast. One dish is quite enough. Did I say one dish?—Ah, Martha, don't you see that the one thing I want most in the world is not food, but the thing that Mary is offering me—a loving and understanding heart?"

Boys and girls, Christ still comes to visit His friends. He comes to our heart as our guest any day. What do we offer Him? Do we think it necessary to make a great fuss before we can entertain Him? Do we think we must bring Him this thing or that?

There is only one thing He asks for. It is the thing that Mary gave Him long ago, the welcome of a loving and an understanding heart.

"I wish everybody saw me with Grandpapa's eyes," sighed a little maiden when someone found fault with her. Grandpapa's eyes were the understanding eyes of love. Let us try to see Jesus with Mary's eyes, then perhaps we shall be worthy of the friendship and the comradeship He offers each one of us.

LILIES.

Consider the lilies, how they grow.—Luke xii. 27.

In the early spring, before the summer heat has parched and dried up plant life, the land of Palestine is a blaze of colour. Everywhere may be seen crocuses, irises, and lilies, also anemones of many colours—red, scarlet, purple, blue, and yellow—till the ground seems to be covered with a rich carpet of the most brilliant tints. It was on a scene like this that Jesus was looking when He said, "Consider the lilies." We do not know which particular flower He meant. It may have been a very brilliant scarlet anemone. It may have been the tall, handsome gladiolus, which raises its blue or purple flowers among the corn. It may have been just lilies in general. In any case He had in His mind brilliant flowers which would remind those who looked at them of King Solomon's royal robes.

Why did Jesus wish us to consider the lilies? Because the lilies bring us messages from God.

1. They bring us a message of *God's love.* They tell us that God cares not merely to make things, but to make them beautiful. They tell us that He loves us so much that He gives us, not just

the things that are necessary, but the things that bring us joy.

Do you know the beautiful old legend of how the flowers came to this earth? It tells that when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden it was a garden of flowers. And of all the fair things in the Garden they loved the flowers best. Every day they went out to seek for fresh flowers and every evening they returned with blossoms of some new form, or shade, or perfume.

One day Adam and Eve fell by their sin, and they were put out of the Garden and an angel was set to guard the gate. And of all the fair things in the Garden, they missed the flowers most; for as yet there were no flowers on the earth.

Then God had compassion on the man and woman and on the countless generations that were to come after them. And He said, "If there are no flowers in the world how will men learn of Him who loves them and clothes them and feeds them? If there are no flowers, how will Christ, when He comes, find illustrations for His teaching? If there are no flowers, how will men get glimpses of the beauty of Heaven?

So God commanded the angel who guarded the gate to take some of the seeds of every flower in the Garden and, as he flew back to heaven, to scatter them over the earth. The angel did as he was commanded. And the winds took the seeds and scattered them far and wide over every continent and island, so that men

might learn of God's love and of the beautiful home He had prepared for those who love Him.

So, boys and girls, that is the first message of the lilies and of every little flower that grows. They teach us that God is love. Have we eyes to read their message?

God made the country,
Man made the town.
God clad the country
In a green gown.

. . . . .

Poor folks from Eden
Driven away,
God made the country
For a holiday.

God gave the country
A flower, a bird,
To comfort His children
For the flaming sword.

For easing and pleasing
He made a tree,
Many a sweet rivulet,
Dew and the bee.

God made the country,
Man made the town,
Is not God a maker
Of great renown?[1]

There is a story of an old Scottish Highlander who every morning went a little distance from his cottage and stood for a few minutes with his bonnet off. One

[1] Katharine Tynan.

day a friend came upon him standing thus. He waited till the old man had covered his head and then he asked him if he had been saying his prayers. With a rare smile the Highlander replied, "I've come here every morning for years to take off my bonnet to the beauty of the world."

If we have eyes to read God's message aright we too shall feel like taking off our bonnet to the beauty of the world.

2. The lilies bring us a message of *God's care.* If God can trouble to clothe the flowers so beautifully, much more will He clothe and care for His children.

Mungo Park, the African traveller, was once attacked and robbed by savages. He was left naked and sick and alone five hundred miles from a European settlement. He had no means of defence against wild beasts; he had no shelter and it was the rainy season. He was just about to give himself up as lost when his eye lit upon a tiny plant of moss no bigger than the tip of his finger. Yet although it was so small the little plant was perfect in form and beauty. And the traveller thought if God had taken such pains to bring a tiny plant to such perfection in that obscure corner of the world, then He must take knowledge of, and care for, the sufferings of one of the creatures made in His own image. That thought gave him new hope. He set out to seek for help and eventually reached safety.

Boys and girls, this was Jesus' special message about

the lilies. He came to earth to show us that God cares for us. He lived and died to show us that God cares. And if He cares in the big things surely He cares in the little things too. How are we repaying all His love and care?

"BE PREPARED."

Be ye also ready.—Luke xii. 40.

WHEN the army is in the field, the commanding officer may come at any time to any part of it, and he expects when he does so to find everyone at his post. The sentinels must be on duty, watchful and alert for the coming of the enemy. The soldiers must be drilled and disciplined, and their guns must be clean and in working order. When the commanding officer comes he must find them ready.

At the time of the Boer War in South Africa, it was necessary to send Lord Roberts out to take command. It is said that, when he was asked if his health were good enough to bear the strain, since he was an elderly man, he replied, "Yes, I thought I might be wanted, and I have kept myself fit." So he was ready when the need arose. But he would not have been able to go if he had allowed himself to get slack and indolent and unfit.

You know the motto of the boy scouts. It is "Be prepared." If a boy scout sees an accident, and gives "first aid," or saves someone from drowning and restores him by artificial respiration, it is because he

has been trained in ambulance work and swimming, and is ready for the emergency.

When Christ comes He will not come like a general on the day of a public review, when the day has long been fixed, and every man knows he must be at his best. He will come as the general comes when he pays a surprise visit to his men, to see how things go on when he is not expected. Or He will come as a friend comes, without an invitation, to a house where he is familiar. He is not expected, and no special preparation has been made for him, but he "takes his friends as he finds them."

That is a great test of readiness. If the sentry is not always on the alert, he may be caught napping when the commander comes. If the mistress of the house is an untidy person, and her house is fit to be seen only when she expects company, the visitor may come when she is not ready for him.

What would Christ wish to find us doing if He came? Just the work He has given us to do, whatever it is. We all have something which has been given us to do, and He would like to find us doing it, and doing it well. It may be very humble work, and very uninteresting—as monotonous as that of the sentry pacing his rounds—but it is ours, and it is just what we should be found doing.

There was once a wise judge who, when sudden darkness came on, and people thought the end of the world was at hand, said, "Bring lights, and let

us go on with the case. We cannot be better employed, if the end has come, than in doing our duty."

Then, too, we should be getting ready for Heaven. If you knew that you were to be sent alone to live in France, would you not try to learn all you could about the country to which you were going? You would try to learn the language and to find out about the customs, that you might not feel a stranger when you went there. If you are to feel happy in Heaven you must be learning to live the heavenly life now.

A gentleman in the South, before the American Civil War, had a Christian slave; and when the master died they told the slave that the master had gone to Heaven. The old slave shook his head. "I'se 'fraid massa no gone dere," he said. "But why, Ben?" he was asked. "Cos, when massa go north, or go a journey to the Springs, he talk 'bout it long time, and get ready. Nebber hear him talk 'bout going to Heaven; nebber see him get ready to go dere!"

A little girl one day said to her mother, "Mamma, my Sunday-school teacher tells me that this world is only a place in which God lets us live a while, that we may prepare for a better world. But, mother, I do not see anybody *preparing*. I see you preparing to go into the country, and Auntie is preparing to come here; but I do not see anyone preparing to go there; why don't they try to get ready?"

If Heaven be the land we hope to reach,
Is it not time to learn the heavenly speech?

It were so sad, amid the shining band
To roam, lost children, none could understand:

While blessed eyes should learn a sweet despair,
Knowing we never could be happy there.[1]

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 28.

THREE GREAT TREES.

A great tree.—Luke xiii. 19 (AV).

"A GREAT tree"—that is our text this morning. I am just sorry it is not "*three* great trees," for I am going to tell you this morning of three great trees, each of which is great in more ways than one.

The trees of which I am going to speak are alive at this moment, so far as I know. They are all to be found in the north-east corner of Scotland, and they are growing not so very far apart. You could see them all in one day if you had a cycle, for the first and the second are growing within a mile or two of each other, and the third is distant only about thirty miles from the first.

1. The first great tree grows at the edge of a wood close to the road. You can hardly fail to notice it as you walk past. If your eyes are sharp you will look twice at it and then you will exclaim, "How very queer!" No wonder! This extraordinary tree is not one tree, but two trees in one. About a foot from the ground the trunk, which is that of a beech, divides in two. One-half goes on growing as a beech, but the other turns into an ash. You can pick out

its stem at once in contrast with that of the beech, and if you look up you will see far overhead branches of ash leaves and branches of beech leaves mingling in the friendliest fashion. How did these trees come to be one? Who can tell? They are old trees now, and they have been sharing the same roots for many and many a year. There is no quarrelling who shall have the most sap, or who shall get the greatest amount of sunshine. They have shared and shared alike all their lives, and that is how people stop to admire them to-day.

I wish we were all as ready as that tree to share our good things. I am afraid some of us are more like the little girl who had a sister a year older than herself. Whatever the older sister got the younger insisted on having also. Her favourite words were, "Me too!" One day the older girl was ill and the doctor ordered her medicine with a particularly horrid taste. Little sister saw the bottle, and she saw mother measuring out a spoonful into a glass for the invalid. As usual she cried, "Me too!" And mother thought it would be a good lesson for little sister, and she knew the medicine would do her no harm, so she gave "Me too" an overflowing spoonful. After that "Me too" was less heard in the nursery.

Now which do you admire most—the twin trees or little "Me too"? I know which I admire, and which I wish you to copy.

2. The second tree is a lime tree. It is growing in

the grounds of a famous castle, and it is almost as famous as the castle itself. It is carefully preserved and has a railing round it, and the Duke who owns it is tremendously proud of it. Well may he be! How big do you think it is? Well, you may not believe me when I tell you, but it covers half an acre of ground. It is so huge that they say 1000 men can stand under its shade. How did it manage to grow so great? I can tell you in three words—by being humble. When it spread its long branches it did not lift them haughtily to heaven, it bent them meekly towards the earth. And these branches as they swept the ground took root and sprang up again around their parent tree, so that besides the great main stem there are countless smaller stems steadying and supporting and feeding that great tree. Like all truly great people that splendid lime is humble. You see you can never be truly great unless you are first truly humble.

They tell a tale of a certain royal princess who is living to-day. When she was a young girl she was crossing a gangway from a ship to the quay, and her foot slipped. She would have fallen but a sailor on the ship put out a hand and steadied her, saying, "Take care, Miss!" The princess, I suppose, was rather cross about having tripped, and she turned round and said sharply, "Don't call me 'Miss'! Remember I am a *Princess.*" The sailor looked rather put out, but the Queen, who was walking behind her daughter, had heard the rebuke. She turned to the sailor and said graciously, "Thank you very much

indeed for your kindness. My daughter, as she says, is a princess; but we hope some day she will be a *lady*." That wise Queen knew that to be proud was to be merely small, and to be humble was to be really great. Boys and girls, which do you admire most—the giant tree or the silly princess?

3. The third tree is an oak. To my mind it is the greatest of the three great trees, although you may not agree with me at the first glance. It grows, like the first tree, near the high road. But, alas! it does not stand up straight and tall. A winter's gale has blown it over, and it lies on its side with three-quarters of its roots sticking up in the air. Its leafy top, too, has been sawn away, for it fell across the road, and so it has only about twenty feet of trunk left. Do you think it has given up and ceased to grow because it has lost all its head, and most of its roots? Not a bit of it! It is as busy as ever sending out branches and leaves on the piece of trunk which remains.

And so I think that tree is the greatest of the three trees because it is so brave and plucky. You would have quite excused it if, when the wind knocked it over and the saw beheaded it, it had said, "It's no use growing any more. I'm done. All I can do now is to die." But that oak was no ordinary oak. It had plenty of pluck, and with its six remaining roots it set to work to make itself over again.

Boys and girls, I want you to imitate that oak. Never acknowledge you are beaten. Stick in! What

are difficulties and obstacles? They are just chances to show your mettle. Keep smiling and keep going on when it would be easier to sit down and weep. Though you should lose everything else in the world, *never lose heart.* That's pluck. And it is pluck that wins in life. You admire it, I admire it, everyone admires it. And, let me tell you a secret, God admires it most of all.

THE LOWEST ROOM.

Go and sit down in the lowest place.—Luke xiv. 10.

JESUS had been invited to a feast at the house of a leading Pharisee and He noticed that when the guests were taking their places at table they jostled and pushed each other to get the best positions. The seat of honour was that next the host, and the Pharisees thought a great deal more about getting that place than we should, because the person who managed to secure it was the most honoured guest and was very important for the time being.

Now Jesus had been watching the ugly scramble, and He pointed out how foolish and selfish it was, but He did this in a very nice way. If He had tried to interfere with the guests directly, He would have been rude to His host and would probably have made the guests angry too. Jesus was always courteous. He never hurt people's feelings unnecessarily. There was nothing rough or clumsy in His touch. He was not like some well-meaning people who do only harm when they try to do good, because they are so awkward about it.

On this occasion He drew a little word picture. He gave them some advice about how to behave at

a wedding-feast. The feast in the Pharisee's house was not a wedding-feast, so they could not think He was making personal remarks. He said, "If you are asked to a wedding-feast, don't go and sit down in the best place, because somebody more important than you may arrive after you and the host may ask you to give up your seat. All the places next in order will have been taken and you will feel very small when you are obliged to take the least honourable place of all. The best plan is to take the lowest place. You can't be put any lower, and when the host comes in he will probably ask you to go up higher, and all your friends will honour you."

Now what did Jesus mean by that parable? I think He meant that to win the best things we must be humble, and that we should never be ashamed to take the humble place.

"Go and sit down in the lowest place." I wonder what these words say to us.

1. Well, I think first of all they say to us that if we want to learn anything worth knowing we have to begin at the very bottom of the ladder. We have to learn simple tasks before difficult ones, easy lessons before hard ones. That means that often we have to go through a great deal of dreary drudgery.

One day a mother was talking to her children about giving up things for the sake of others and of how much good it did people, and then she began to ask the children what they thought they would give up.

The first girl said she thought she would give up sugar. Then the mother turned to the second one. "And what will you give up, Mary?" she asked. "I think," said Mary slowly, "I think I will give up lessons!"

Sometimes we feel like that, don't we? We feel as if we should like to make a bonfire of our lesson-books. But remember we can never be wise or great unless we peg away at the uninteresting first steps, and second steps, and third steps. And when we have mastered those we shall feel we have really done something worth doing, we shall find that these interesting things lead on to greater and more interesting things.

2. Again, I think these words tell us that we should be unselfish and courteous. Other people have as much right to the higher room as we have. We should consider their claims; we should not push and grasp. One of the ugliest sights one can see is a crowd of people all pushing to try to get the best point of view or the best seat.

And we should never be ashamed of the little lowly services, the little courtesies which sweeten life so much for other people. A missionary in Formosa tells of how one day he walked along a road behind a native Christian who was carrying a heavy load. Suddenly the man stopped and removed a piece of prickly bamboo from the path. It was a small act, but it showed that the man was thinking of, and caring for, others.

Do you ever take the trouble to think for others in that way? Do you ever pick up your mother's ball of wool when it falls, or clear orange and banana skins off the pavement, or give your seat to an old lady in a tramcar? These are the things that cost so little and that mean so much.

3. Another thing our text tells us is that we should not think too highly of ourselves. The man in the parable who took the highest place was snubbed. People who try to push themselves forward and be important lay themselves open to snubs. The truly noble people are ready and glad to own that others are more worthy than they.

Long ago in the town of Sparta in Greece there was a certain election day. Three hundred men were to be chosen to rule over the town, but there were more than three hundred candidates, so it was evident they could not all be elected. Among the candidates was a good and worthy man called Pædaretus. When the results came out Pædaretus' name was not among the list of those chosen. One of his friends began to sympathize with him and to lament that the Spartans had not been wiser in their choice, but Pædaretus answered, "I am glad that in Sparta there are three hundred men better than I." I wonder how many of us could say that and really mean it.

4. But I think the greatest of all the lessons these words teach us is that if we want to belong to Jesus

we must put away all our pride. There is a verse which says—

> Humble we must be if to heaven we go;
> High is the roof there, but the door is low.

And that just means that there is room for everybody in Heaven, but the only way to get in is by stooping, by being humble. Jesus wants everybody to come to Him; it does not matter how weak, or how foolish, or how bad we are. But if we come we must lay down our pride and self-sufficiency at His feet and just trust Him for everything.

HOW TO GET UP HIGHER.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luke xiv. 11.

A YOUNG girl who was visiting London for the first time was taken to see a famous collection of paintings. She felt she had never enjoyed anything so much: she told her friends that she wanted to go back to that picture gallery every day. She was a girl who was, in fact, very fond of painting, and had been having lessons at a school in a little country town. The first thing she did after she went home was to buy a big easel, extra oil colours, a collection of brushes, and a large canvas. Then she announced to her mother and brothers that she was going to paint a picture. "I have a great idea in my mind," she said. She tried to put that great idea on to the canvas, and—what do you think?—she was crying with mortification within an hour. She discovered that she could not even draw properly.

I wonder if any boy here, who is ambitious to be an architect, a builder, or a sculptor, would be as foolish. I once knew a boy art student very well. He was a clever young fellow and used to gain prizes for what he called his "compositions." His master would give out a subject, and say to the class, "Make a rough sketch

of that in charcoal." Well, that boy had great ideas; he could very easily make the rough sketch, and it was generally brilliantly clever. But he would never try to go any further. He had not learned that the beginning of success in anything means humble, hard work.

Have you ever heard the story of the man who went to a great shipowner to beg work? "I will do anything," he said, "to gain an honest living."

"Well," replied the shipowner, "do you see that heap of stones on the other side of the yard? Take them and pile them up in the same way on this side, and I'll give you four shillings."

The man did so and received his pay. Next morning he was told by the shipowner to remove the stones back to the place where they had first lain. Day after day he carted them uncomplainingly backwards and forwards till a whole week had passed. On Saturday the employer called the man before him. "I like you, my man," said he; "there's no nonsense about you; you are willing to do what you are told and you are not afraid of a humble job. Many a man would have objected to doing this work over and over again. Now you shall have work so long as I can give it you."

I wonder how many of us here would have been content to tackle that humble job without grousing? Twenty of us? Certainly not! Ten of us? No, not likely! Five of us? Scarcely! One of us? Well, perhaps just one. So rare a virtue is real humility!

None of us like to be what we call "humbled." Yet sometimes it is good for a boy to be unsuccessful at an examination. Sometimes it is good for a girl to be thwarted. We learn a great deal in the Valley of Humiliation. John Bunyan wrote a beautiful little bit about a boy who lived in this Valley.

"Now as the pilgrims were going along, in the Valley, and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a very fresh and well-favoured countenance; and as he sat by himself, he sang. Hark, said Mr. Greatheart, to what the shepherd's boy saith. So they hearkened, and he said—

He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide. . . .

Then said the guide, Do you hear him? I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet."

Jesus Christ said we must become as little children. That was surely being humble. Jesus Christ Himself became a little child; and it becomes us to try to follow where He led. If we are truly humble, one day —we have Christ's word for it—we shall get up higher.

THE LOST LAMB.

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?—Luke xv. 4.

ONCE upon a time, there dwelt in an Eastern land a shepherd who had a flock of sheep. He had exactly one hundred sheep, and he knew each of them by name.

In the daytime this shepherd led his flock out to green pastures on the hillside. Sometimes there were rough places to cross in going from one pasture to the other; but the shepherd was always at hand with his crook to help any sheep that got into difficulties. Now and again they came to a swift stream; but he always went first to find the easiest crossing; and the sheep who kept nearest to him and followed where he led came through the waters best. At night he brought his flock back to the fold. It was enclosed by a high wall crowned with sharp thorns so that no robber or wolf could get in to steal the sheep.

Now one year the shepherd had a worrying time on account of a little lamb that was very wilful. It was always loitering behind the rest to finish a particularly juicy clump of grass, or going a little bit up the hill to

crop a daisy that looked specially nice. When it came to a stream it preferred to choose its own crossing, and many a time it would have been drowned if the shepherd had not rescued it with his crook. Several times it nearly broke a leg by going into rough places, just to show how well it could jump from rock to rock. And altogether it cost its kind master many an anxious hour.

As it grew older it grew bolder, and that was how it got into the great difficulty of which I am going to tell you.

When the shepherd brought his sheep back to the fold at night, it was his custom to count them all to make sure that none was missing. One evening he found he had only ninety-nine instead of one hundred. He counted them again twice to make sure he had made no mistake, but it was only too true—one sheep had gone astray. Anxiously he scanned the flock to find out which was missing, and he discovered that it was the poor naughty lamb.

Now this is what had happened. When the shepherd was leading his flock from one pasture to another, the lamb had seen, farther up the hill, a nice little bit of green which looked most inviting. Why shouldn't he have it? He was sure it was much nicer than the grass where they were going. In any case, he would just run up and have a nibble at it, and he could easily overtake the others. Then he saw another bit of green a little farther on, and he must just have that too. The lamb was enjoying himself immensely. Why

should he bother about that old shepherd and the silly sheep? And, as a matter of fact, he soon forgot about them.

By and by the sun began to sink and the shadows to grow longer. Then the lamb thought it might be safer to turn homewards. But which way to turn? He had reached a part of the mountain that was quite unfamiliar to him. The shepherd and the sheep had long ago vanished from sight. He gave a bleat, but there was no answer—they were out of hearing too!

The sun sank to rest behind the hills, and swiftly the darkness of the Eastern night began to fall. By this time the lamb had become very much afraid. He thought of the wild beasts that he had heard prowling round the fold at night. He remembered how he had crept closer to his mother, and how she had comforted him, saying, "We are quite safe in the fold and the shepherd is watching." Ah, how he longed now for the shepherd and the safe fold! Then he thought of the stories he had heard of the robbers who dwelt in the mountains, robbers who seized and slaughtered silly, straying sheep. And he shuddered with terror lest they should find him.

On and on he wandered, bleating piteously. His little legs were so weary that they could scarcely bear him; his beautiful fleecy coat was tangled by briers and soiled with mud; his throat was parched with thirst. Far up the mountain, the howl of a wolf answered his bleat, and he held his breath and ran lest his enemy should find him. At last, utterly exhausted,

he lay down under the shelter of a rock and prepared to die; for he had given up all hope of ever finding the fold again.

And now let us return to the shepherd. When he discovered his loss, how did he act? Do you think he said, "Well, this is most unfortunate; but I have still ninety-nine sheep and I must just make the best of things. He was a troublesome creature anyway"—or, "Poor little lamb, I am very sorry for him, but it can't be helped! No doubt by this time he will have fallen over a precipice, or into the hands of robbers; or perhaps he has been devoured by a wild beast. I should only risk my own life by going after him. It is more valuable than his. And, after all, I should probably not find him."

If your pet pussy or your dear doggie went amissing, is that the way you would behave? No, I think you would put forth every effort to find it. You would go to the police office, and you would ask all your friends and neighbours if they had seen it, and you would put an advertisement in a shop window or in a newspaper offering a reward for its return.

What did the shepherd do? He looked round on the ninety-and-nine sheep. They were quite safe in the fold, and he could leave them in charge of his hireling. But up somewhere on the bleak mountain-side a poor, unhappy, naughty little lamb was needing him badly. What matter that it had been troublesome? Did it not the more require the shepherd's tender care? So

girding his cloak about him, he set out into the dark night. Not a thought of his own weariness and his well-earned rest! Never a care for the perils of the mountain or the danger from wolves or robbers! Something he valued more than life was in trouble, and he alone could save it.

On through the darkness he stumbled, calling now gently and tenderly, now clear and loud—on over the rough rocks, and through the cruel briers. Once he found himself at the edge of a precipice where one more step would have meant certain death. Again he had to ford a swift river which almost bore him away. Now the hills echoed to the cries of the wild beasts hungry for their prey. But he only hastened lest his dear one should be in immediate danger. Weary, bruised, and torn, he never gave up hope. With untiring patience he searched the night through.

And then, at last, in answer to his call, he heard a faint bleat. He called again, and stopped to listen. Yes, it was the cry of his lamb—so piteous and feeble, but the cry of his own dear lamb!

In a few minutes he was by its side. Do you think he reproached it for all the weariness and pain it had caused him? Do you think he thrashed it for its wicked wilfulness? Ah no! In his heart there was room for only one thing—a great joy at the recovery of his lost treasure. Tenderly caressing it, calling it by name, he lifted the frightened, bleeding creature up in his strong arms, and, laying it on his own weary shoulders, he bore it all the long way back to the fold.

Boys and girls, we have a Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep. For them He left His happy home in heaven; for them He trod the thorny path; for them He toiled, and suffered, and bore the bitter cross. He knows each of us separately and calls us by name, and if you have not come into the fold, there is an empty place in His great heart which nothing else can fill. He seeks for you just as if you were the only child in the world, and He will never be satisfied until He finds you.

The lamb was a very silly little thing to wander away from its kind shepherd, but what would you have thought of it if, when it heard his call, it had turned and run away as hard as ever it could until it fell over a precipice. Don't you think it would have been sillier still? And that is just the way some of us are treating the Good Shepherd. When He calls us we run away, and we are sillier than sheep.

Jesus told the story of the Lost Sheep to help us to see how much God loves us and how much He wants us, however wicked and troublesome we are. Will you let Him guide you safely into the fold?

THE LOST COIN.

What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?—Luke xv. 8.

ARE you clever at finding things that are lost? Little people usually are, perhaps because their eyes are so sharp. If a penny or a sixpence curls away on the floor, give me a boy or a girl to find it. You know all the tricks of the best way to set about it. You pop down on your knees at once and crawl under the tables and chairs. If that fails, you lay your cheek against the floor so that your eye may be on a level with the ground and very likely you discover the missing coin that way. If not, you turn back the rug and poke your fingers under the edge of the carpet, or you take a stick and fish about with it under any piece of furniture that has a small space between itself and the floor. And in less time than it takes to tell how you do it you produce the lost sixpence.

Sometimes it is something more valuable than a sixpence that you are called in to help to find—the glass of grandfather's spectacles, or the key of father's desk; mother's brooch, or one of her rings. Sometimes what is lost does not appear to you worth all the fuss

that is being made about it, till you hear its owner say, "It is not the actual value of the thing; it is its associations that make it precious to me." Then you understand that what seems to you a trifle is of priceless value to its owner, because it was the gift of some dear friend, or it recalls some special occasion.

Now to-day's text makes us think of the hunt for some seeming trifle such as that. Christ was talking to the scribes and Pharisees, those men who were always criticizing Him and complaining that He was too friendly with the people whom they contemptuously called "publicans and sinners." Christ wanted to show those scribes and Pharisees that the people they despised were inestimably precious to God. Christ had a special name for such people. He loved to speak of them as "lost"—He thought of them as children of God who had wandered away in paths of their own foolish choosing till they had lost the road to the Father's house. Christ said He had come to this world for the very purpose of seeking and saving such "lost" people. He had come to tell them that God was ever looking for them and longing for them and would not be satisfied till He had them all safe at home. On this occasion Christ told three stories to explain how God felt about the matter—the story of the lost sheep, the story of the lost or prodigal son, and, wedged between them, to-day's text—the story of the lost coin.

We cannot tell if Christ invented this story. Quite as likely He was just recalling something that had happened in His own childhood. He may have been

going back to a day when Mary, His mother, had been greatly distressed because she had lost one of the ten small silver coins which she, like other married Eastern women, wore strung as an ornament on her forehead. For those who know about such things tell us that the coin mentioned here is a Greek coin and not the usual Roman silver coin for spending which is spoken of in other parts of the New Testament. That string of dangling coins had been given to Mary by her husband on her wedding-day. It was as sacred and precious to her as your mother's wedding-ring is to your mother, so no wonder she was sadly grieved when one of the coins slipped from its fastening. Perhaps Christ helped her to look for it. Perhaps He was so small at the time that He only watched with breathless interest whilst His mother turned the house upside down in search of it.

Turning the house upside down was rather a different operation in the East in Christ's day from what it is in our homes to-day. There were no wardrobes to ransack, and very few pieces of furniture to move about. But hunting for a small thing not much larger than a silver sixpence would not be easy, for there was no light in an Eastern peasant's house except the scant rays that entered by the open doorway. So first Mary lit a lamp, then she lifted and shook the straw or reed mats that were the only kind of carpet she had, and then she took a broom and carefully swept every inch of the hard-beaten clay floor. As she swept she stooped every now and then, and with lamp in hand examined

closely the pile of sweepings. At last her eye caught the glitter of silver, and with a cry of joy she bent down and picked up from the heap of dust her lost treasure.

And then what a scene of rejoicing there was! Mary ran to the door and called to her neighbours the good news, and they gathered round the threshold, and turned over the recovered coin in their hands, and all talked at once, and exclaimed how glad they were that it had been found.

When Christ had got so far in the story He added the most important bit of all. He told the scribes and Pharisees that there was as great joy among the angels in heaven when one of God's lost children was found as there was among Mary's neighbours when she discovered her missing coin.

A Sunday-school teacher was once relating this story to a class of small boys. They listened very quietly till she came to the words, "And she swept and swept, till at last she found it." There was silence for a moment, and then one little fellow held up his hand. "But," he inquired anxiously, "where *did* she find it?" He wanted to know the exact spot.

Well, as we have already said, it was most likely in a pile of dust and rubbish that the coin was found. And that is where many of God's lost children are to be found to-day. In the lanes and alleys of our great cities, amidst all their squalor and dirt and misery, there are thousands of God's lost children—lost, like the

coin, through no fault of their own. Would you not like to help God to find them? When you grow a little older you can do it by going down and working in the missions. But even now you can help by giving your pennies, by gathering bunches of flowers from the woods or from your gardens to send to those who live in these cheerless streets, by sparing a toy or two from your store for some little sick boy or girl. These may seem very little things to you, but they are your share of Home Mission work, and they are not little in God's sight.

MAKING A FRESH START
(New Year).

Dead, and . . . alive again.—Luke xv. 32.

I FEEL sure that every boy and girl here likes making a fresh start. Don't you love getting a new drawing-book? The clean pages look just as if they waited for your pictures. You toss the old one carelessly aside; you feel you are done with it. That is a pity, I think; old drawing-books are most interesting. Take my advice and begin keeping yours.

I looked into one the other day. I learned many things from it, and they all had to do with a boy called John. He had a real taste for drawing; I saw that at once. "John has the making of an artist in him," I said to myself at page number one. He had had no lessons, yet he seemed to be able to do wonderful things with his pencil. You should have seen the soldiers on that first page. There was very little drawing in the picture: the men were just put in with a few strokes; yet, how they ran! But before I had turned over a few more leaves I discovered that whilst John was an artist he was first of all a boy, a boy, too, like a great many others. He liked making fresh starts, and he was inclined to stop there.

I knew another clever boy. He was much older than John—almost a man, in fact. I shall give him the name of Fred. He also liked drawing. But he *loved* painting. There was colour in it, and the more Fred studied the colour of Nature, and the colours of things around him, the more fascinated he became. He made up his mind that one day he would be a great artist, and he managed somehow to persuade his father to allow him to become a student at one of our finest Art Schools. When he started to work there everything was new to him; he had never felt so happy.

One thing annoyed him, however; he could not stand the colour of the wallpaper in his bedroom! The lady in whose house Fred lived had taken a great liking to him. Fred persuaded her to agree to a new paper being hung. "I will do it myself," he said, "if you simply allow me to choose the colouring." He chose a plain brown cartridge paper. Artists all like it, because it shows up their pictures so well. Fred had managed to collect not a few fine sketches, so when the room was finished even the lady who had to pay all the expense was pleased. She quoted, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." And Fred was happy. When he had left school, his father had sent him into an office, and he disliked it. Now he had made a fresh start; he had begun to live.

But a month or two passed, and Fred was "slacking"; another month, and he had ceased to care for his pretty room. When I saw it everything lay about

in great disorder. The fine sketches were on the walls, but at once one could tell that it was the room of a fellow who "didn't care." He made another fresh start. You will be glad to hear that he is now getting on famously. Where do you think he learned the great lessons of life? On the battlefield.

New surroundings do help us to make fresh starts. Why, even if a little girl but gets a new dress, a new hat, and new shoes, she feels she is somebody more important than when she wore her old clothes. But new clothes may have a better effect than that. They may make a girl feel that she wants to be tidy, to help mother, to be a *real* lady. Boys are just like girls, only *different*. What boy does not feel he is a new sort of being when he puts on his first sports' outfit? It is getting up a step, and he makes all sorts of good resolutions.

Now, think of how well Jesus Christ understood us. The most beautiful story in the New Testament is about a fresh start. A young man went away into the far country and tried to forget his home, but could not. He fell very low indeed, and when at last he "came to himself" and returned to his father, who had never ceased to love him, one of the first things the father did was to call for the best robe in the house, the ring of sonship, and new shoes. And I believe he dressed his erring boy with his own hands.

Boys and girls, we are about to enter a New Year. All over the world the New Year is spoken of as a time

for making fresh starts. Even in far-away India, where the boys and girls get bewildered over the number of gods they are told about, there is a New Year goddess. "Her work is to look into every house on New Year's Day to see whether all is clean and in order. If she finds a dirty house she will send bad luck all through the year. A week before she comes everybody is cleaning, cleaning; all the dark corners are swept out; all the walls and the doorways are painted in grand patterns; all the idols are washed Little girls wear their best dresses then and put marigolds in their hair; fathers and mothers and all are clean and grand. Then all the lamps are lit so that *Lakshmi* may see into the corners, and everybody keeps the *Feast of Lamps* and makes holiday."

Make a fresh start with the New Year. What can you do? There were days at school during the Old Year when you yourselves felt that you were mean and spiteful. You lost your temper, you had unkind and suspicious thoughts about your schoolfellows. Make a fresh start to-day by asking God to help you to be true and noble and kind and good. As citizens there is a great work waiting for you—a work that will need all the earnestness of which you are capable, and you cannot wait till you are grown up to acquire it.

You will be happy in being earnest. You will play your games all the better; you will be better sons and daughters; you will be better brothers and sisters; you will be better schoolfellows. There is not a man of us who does not wish he were in your place, and

could live to see what God has in store for us. We believe it is something good. Boys and girls, try to deserve it; then, even in making the effort, the New Year will be a happy one for you—happy in the highest and best sense.

MAMMON, THE MONEY-GOD.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.—Luke xvi. 13.

THERE was once a good knight called Sir Guyon, who was sent by his queen to a far country to deliver the people from the enchantments of a wicked witch. As he went on his way, thinking of gallant adventures and brave deeds, he came into a wilderness, and there he found a gloomy glade so closed in by trees that the sunlight never entered it. His way led through it, and there, sitting in the darkness, he discovered a man.

He was an ugly man with bleared eyes; his face was black with smoke, and there was soot on his hair and beard. His hands were black like a smith's. In his lap was a great heap of gold which he turned over and over, and all around him were piles of gold and money.

When he saw the knight the man started up in a fright, and began to pour the money into a hole in the ground. But Sir Guyon seized his arm and demanded who he was, and why he was hiding his money there, instead of making a good use of it. "I am Mammon, the money-god," he answered. "I am the greatest god beneath the sky. From me comes all the gold that

men strive and toil for. If you will be my servant I will give you for your own all you see, or even ten times as much." "Mammon," said Sir Guyon, "offer your gold to those weak men who covet it. I am an honourable knight vowed to great deeds. It would ill become me to allow the love of such dross to spoil my heroic spirit. It is for crowns and kingdoms I strive. I will not be your servant."

"Do you not know," said Mammon, "that money can buy everything? It can buy crowns and kingdoms." "I think differently," said Sir Guyon. "Riches are the cause of great evil. Money is often got by deceit, and kept with anxiety. It is spent with pride and wastefulness, and it leaves behind it grief and sorrow. It brings strife and bloodshed, and all kinds of wrong-doing which a noble heart despises. I do not wish your gold. Men were far happier in ancient times, when they lived simply and without money. When they began to seek gold they learned greed and avarice."

"All very well," said Mammon, "for those who lived long ago, but in these days you cannot live without money. Come now, take what you please." "I cannot take it," said the knight, "unless I know how you got it. I cannot take money that has been got by dishonesty or wrong."

So Mammon led Sir Guyon by a dark and dismal way to a huge underground cave. They passed by strange shapes called Pain and Strife and Jealousy and Fear and many more, and guarding the door of

the cave sat Care. Entering in, they found themselves in a great vault of gold. The roof and walls and floor were all gold. This vault contained great chests of gold, but scattered all around were the bones of men who had died in striving to get them. "Behold," said Mammon, "the happiness of the world! This is what all men aim at—to be rich. Be my servant, and all these riches will be yours."

Now, all this time, an ugly shape was hovering behind Sir Guyon, ready to tear him to pieces if he should touch anything. "I will not be your servant," said the knight. "I seek a higher happiness—the happiness of doing great deeds. I will not be the servant of riches."

> Another bliss before mine eyes I place,
> Another happiness, another end.

Then Mammon showed the knight great furnaces watched by toiling slaves, while others ladled melted gold out of huge cauldrons. Still he refused to be tempted. Next the god led him into a golden room, where a beautiful lady, dressed in the richest clothes, sat on a throne. "This is my daughter," said Mammon. "Be my servant and you shall have her for your wife, and much gold besides." But the knight had given his love already to a lady, and true knights do not break their vows, or give their love for gold, so Sir Guyon refused this offer too.

Then Mammon was mad with rage, but he still hoped to get the knight into his power; so he took him to a garden, dark with cypress trees, and full of

all sorts of poisonous shrubs and flowers. There he showed him a tree laden with golden apples. A mound ran round the garden, and a river flowed outside. The branches of the tree hung over the river. Strange noises reached Sir Guyon's ears, and, climbing the mound and looking over, he saw men moaning and struggling in the river, trying in vain to grasp the golden fruit which hung just beyond their reach. But Mammon pulled him back. "What a fool you are!" he said. "Why do you not gather the golden fruit? You are afraid!" But Sir Guyon knew that all the time the fiend waited behind him to tear him to pieces. So he resisted this also, and the god had no power to keep him, but had to let him return to the upper world, where he went on his way, and, after many adventures, accomplished the task set him by his queen.

Boys and girls, this story is an allegory. A boy starts out in life with a high resolve to be a true knight, to live a pure life, to fight for the right, and to aid the oppressed. As he goes through life he meets everywhere the temptation to put gain first, to serve the money-god. Money means so much in pleasure, or comfort, or success. To get it he must make some sacrifice of principle here and there. When he has it he will make a good use of it, but he cannot do without it. He must do as others do or be left behind.

The temptation of Mammon comes to him when he chooses his career in life. Will he choose the career

which brings most money, or the career in which he can best use his powers, and be of most service in the world? It comes to him afterwards in business. Will he be content with what he can honestly make, or will he squeeze all he can out of those who work for him, and deceive with bad work those who buy from him?

If he yields to such temptations he is the slave of the money-god. He is also the slave of Mammon when he makes money only to hoard it. Then he is like Mammon hiding his treasure in the ground, instead of using it well. His is a kind of success in life that is really failure.

True success is not to be the slave of money, but to make it your servant for good. True success is to refuse money wrongly made and money for which you must give up your highest aims, and to be content with what you can have with a good conscience. So you will resist the power of Mammon, and, like the good knight,

> Another bliss before your eyes you place,
> Another happiness, another end—

the end of the service of God. For if you are the slave of Mammon you cannot be the true servant of God. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

THE MEN WHO FORGOT TO SAY "THANK YOU."

Where are the nine?—Luke xvii. 17.

NEARLY two thousand years ago, there dwelt in a village of Samaria a man to whom came a great trouble.

One day he noticed that there was something wrong with his foot, something that turned him sick with fear. He must go to the priest on Mount Gerizim, the man who knew about such things. He must go to him and receive his verdict and abide by it.

Sore at heart, he toiled up the mountain-side to the temple. The priest examined him and then the man received his doom. He was a leper. Henceforth he must be an outcast, a creature loathed and shunned of all men, a man carrying about with him a living death. There was no hope of his recovery, for the disease was incurable.

He returned to tell his wife the sad news and to bid her farewell. And that evening he left his happy home and went out on to the high-road. Henceforth he would be a wanderer on the face of the earth.

He could not live in his own village, for a leper might not frequent the haunts of other men. The

disease was infectious and must at all costs be prevented from spreading. He felt that to stay anywhere near his home would make his suffering even more unendurable. He could not bear to see the familiar sights and know that he had no part in them, to meet on the road men with whom he had been friendly, and to keep far off from them crying, "Unclean, unclean!"

So by degrees he wandered northwards till he came to the borderland between Samaria and Galilee. There he joined himself to some Jews who were lepers like himself. In time of health these Jews would have scorned him, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. But now a common bond drew them together. They were all alike sufferers and must do what they could to help each other.

So they wandered about the high-roads or in the neighbourhood of the villages, their clothes rent and their heads bare according to the demands of the Law. They picked up a meal from anyone who was charitable enough to give them one; they slept where they could.

Then one day, on the outskirts of a village, news reached them of a Man who had worked mighty wonders in Galilee. It was said that He had made sick people well, had raised the dead, and had even healed lepers. There was the story of a leper whom He had touched, actually touched! And at His touch the leprosy had departed. The traveller who gave them the news told them that this wonderful Healer, this Jesus, was even now on His way to Jerusalem, and would pass that way. One of the Jews remembered

having heard Him preach in the days before he became a leper. Then he had scoffed at Him, now he was eager to meet Him.

All that day the sick men hung about the entrance to the village—hoping, and yet scarce daring to hope. And on the morrow He came. As they saw Him approach, with one accord they lifted their hoarse voices, and cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

And He had mercy. He looked on them, not with intense loathing as other men had looked, but with a great pity. Then He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. That was all—no wonderful miracle performed, just a quiet command! But there was something about the Stranger which called forth trust, and the men obeyed. And as they went, they were healed.

When the Samaritan saw that he was cured his heart overflowed with joy and thanksgiving. He felt that he must return and search out the Man who had given him this great boon. So he turned back praising and glorifying God, and when he found the Man who had healed him, he fell down before Him in lowly adoration.

But now comes the astonishing part of the story. Ten men had been restored to health, but only one thought it necessary to go back and say "Thank you." Nine Jews went on their way, one Samaritan returned. No doubt the Jews were grateful after a fashion. But their gratitude was not big enough to send them back to the feet of their Healer. And Jesus missed them.

"Were there not ten cleansed?" He asked; "but where are the nine?" He desired their gratitude, not for Himself, but for God. It made Him sad to see that men should be so much taken up with themselves that they could forget what great things God had done for them.

We consider these nine Jews were shabby, mean sort of men, do we not? We think that they might at least have put themselves to the trouble of coming back to thank Christ. I wonder if *we* always remember to say "Thank you" to God? There are things which God is giving us every day, and we have got so accustomed to them that we take them as a matter of course, and forget the Giver.

Here are some of God's gifts—the air we breathe, the sunshine, the showers to refresh the plants, the trees, the flowers, the corn to make bread, our homes, our parents, our friends, our food and clothing, sleep, life, health, happiness. For how many of these do we ever thank Him? Sometimes we don't realize how great these gifts are until one or other is taken away, and then we grumble because we have not got it.

Remember that God likes to receive our thanks. He has given us many beautiful and good things, and it is a very small return that we can make just to thank Him for them. How can we best thank Him? Well there are several ways.

First, we can thank Him by *being contented.* It isn't so difficult to be contented when things go as we like;

it is when things go wrong that we are tempted to grumble. Well that is just the time when it is most worth while being contented, the time when we can show our pluck.

Again, we can thank God by *sharing our gifts with others.* We were not meant to keep everything to ourselves; the happiest people are those who share with others. And Jesus said that when we were kind to people less fortunate than ourselves, we were really being kind to Him.

But the very best way of thanking God is to thank Him by our lives, to thank Him *by loving and serving Him.*

Do you know the legend of how the Te Deum was composed? In the fourth century, there lived in the north of Africa a young man named Augustine. He led a very wild life, but he had a good mother who prayed for him, and her prayers were answered. By and by Augustine went to Italy and there he was converted under the preaching of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Afterwards he became a monk and a bishop, and did a great deal of good among the people in the north of Africa.

The legend tells us that on Easter night in the year 387, immediately after Augustine had been baptized by St. Ambrose in the chief church of Milan, the good Bishop was so filled with gladness that he broke forth into a hymn of thanksgiving; and these were his words: "We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." And Augustine responded, "All the earth

doth worship Thee: the Father everlasting." Then the Bishop composed the third verse, and Augustine the fourth, and so on to the end of the hymn. And when Monica, the mother of Augustine, heard her son, she exclaimed that she would rather have him Augustinus and Christian than Augustus and Emperor of Rome.

This is only a beautiful legend; and you know that legends are a little like fairy tales—they are often imaginary stories. Some people say that the hymn was not composed in this way, but that St. Ambrose translated it from Greek. Be that as it may, Augustine offered up to God a far greater gift than the Te Deum —the gift of a noble life.

And that is the best gift we also can offer Him and the best way we can thank Him for all His loving-kindness.

THE MAN WHO THOUGHT HIMSELF SOMEBODY.

God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men.—Luke xviii. 11.

You all know the story of the Pharisee and the publican—how the two men went up to the Temple to pray; how the Pharisee stood in a conspicuous place and recited a list of all the wicked things he had *not* done and all the good things he thought he *had* done; and how the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Pharisee belonged to a sect or school among the Jews who prided themselves on carefully observing every little point of the Law. At the same time many of them had very little of the true spirit of charity and justice. They had piled up a great heap of trifling forms and ceremonies, and they thought that the observing of these would make them righteous; but they were often hard, unsympathetic, and unmerciful.

The publicans were the tax-gatherers of Palestine. The Holy Land was at that time ruled by the Romans, who taxed the Jews heavily. These taxes were

collected by the publicans, who tried to make as good a thing of it as they could, and who often exacted more than their due. For this reason, and also because they were in the service of the conqueror, they were much hated by the Jews.

And yet the publican in our story was a better man than the Pharisee; for he had a humble, penitent heart and truly felt his need, while the Pharisee was thoroughly well pleased with himself. His prayer was no prayer, but merely a self-complacent boast.

I want you to think specially of one sentence in the Pharisee's prayer—"God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men."

What is the Pharisee doing? Well, he is just blowing his own trumpet as hard as ever he can, and the more noise he makes the better pleased he is with himself. He divides the world into two classes. He puts himself into one class, and the rest of men into the other, and then he sits down and admires himself immensely.

Do we ever thank God that we are "not as the rest of men"? Perhaps we never do it in words, but we do it in thought when we are snobs. What is a snob? A snob is a horrid creature who looks down on others because he fancies they are not so well-off, or so well-dressed, or so well-born, or so well-something-else as he is.

Now snobbishness is a very ugly, a very disagreeable, a very silly, and a very wicked thing, and if any of

you see the tiniest sign of it beginning to grow in you I hope you will nip it in the bud. Here are one or two things that will help to keep us from being snobs if we try very hard to remember them.

1. The first is that *no real gentleman or gentlewoman is a snob.* If you meet people who like to have you think they are better born, or better connected, or wealthier than others, you will know at once that they are not real gentlefolk, whatever their rank. True gentlefolk never think of such things, far less do they speak of them.

"It is such a pity Betty has gone to that common school!" said Mary, aged eleven, in speaking of her cousin. "She has such common friends now, I don't care to play with her." And it never struck Mary that she was giving away her own commonness by making such a remark.

"We live in a big house and my Dad's a gentleman, so I must be a gentleman!" boasted a boy of ten. He and a friend together had just knocked down a street laddie half their size. Well, I hope that gentleman (?) got a good thrashing from his Dad!

If we have had special privileges, if we have been brought up in a comfortable home, if we have had parents who are gentlefolk, then more is required of us. We owe a special debt of gratitude to God. And the best way we can show that gratitude is by being kind and considerate to those who have been less fortunately placed than ourselves.

2. And the second thing we should remember is that *in God's sight we are all equal.*

A little French princess—a daughter of Louis XIV.—was one day in a very bad temper. She grew cross with one of the maids of honour and demanded haughtily, "Am I not the daughter of your king?" "And I, madam," replied the maid of honour, "am I not the daughter of your God?"

If we try to keep in mind that we are all sons and daughters of God, then we shall have no room for haughty or superior thoughts. God made the king in his palace and the little beggar boy on the street. He made the white boys in Europe and the yellow boys in China, the brown boys in India and the black boys in Africa. He gave us all eyes to see with, and ears to hear with, and tongues to speak with, and hearts to love with. He makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on rich and poor alike. He loves us all with the same abounding love.

3. But the chief thing I want you to remember is that *we cannot be the true friends of Jesus if we are snobs.*

The general of an army was seen talking with a poor woman and someone said to him, "You should not talk to that woman. Remember your rank!" Quickly the general turned on the speaker. "And what if my Lord had considered His rank?" said he.

The greatest Gentleman who ever lived was brought up in a carpenter's shop, and made friends of fishermen. He befriended the outcast and despised. He

dined with publicans and sinners. It was chiefly among the poor and lowly that He found His friends, and He was specially tender and pitiful towards those upon whom other men looked with contempt.

If we want to be the friends of Jesus we must keep a humble, loving heart. And in that heart there will be no room for snobbishness.

THE MAN WHO CLIMBED A TREE.

And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him.—Luke xix. 4.

To-day I am going to tell you the story of the man who climbed a tree. The man's name was Zacchæus, and he lived nearly two thousand years ago in the busy town of Jericho. He was a rich man, but he was not a happy man, and I am going to tell you the reason why he was not happy.

Zacchæus was a publican, and as such he was very much despised and looked down upon by his fellow-Jews. Perhaps you will ask why a publican was looked down upon, and to understand that you will have to know what a publican was. Judæa was at that time governed by the Romans. The Romans had conquered the country and they wished to tax the people in order to make a little money and pay themselves back for the expenses of governing the land. But they gathered their taxes in what seems to us a very strange way. Instead of paying a man a fixed salary for doing the work, they sold the taxes to those who would buy them. They would say, "We must get a certain amount of money in taxes out of

Jericho. If you like to pay us that sum then you can have the right to collect the taxes from the people and get your money back from them with a little profit for your labour." The men who bought the right to collect these taxes were called publicans.

Now the publicans were very unpopular for two reasons. The first reason was that they were often unjust. You see they had paid a large sum for the right to collect the taxes, and they wanted to make as much money as they could, so they often imposed very big taxes on the people and exacted more than was their due. And, as a result, they got themselves very much disliked. Not all the publicans were unjust, but a great many were, and the bad ones earned a bad name for their class, so that nobody would trust a publican even if he were a good man. It was very difficult for a publican to be good, just because people supposed that, being a publican, he must be wicked. I daresay Zacchæus often said to himself, "Well it's no use my trying to be good, for everybody thinks I'm bad."

But there was another reason why the publicans were disliked, and that was because they were in the service of Rome. The Jews thought it was a very unpatriotic thing that any of their countrymen should serve the conqueror, and they hated and despised the tax-gatherers in consequence.

Zacchæus was a chief publican—that is to say, he had a number of other publicans under him. He had

made a lot of money, and he held an important position, but he was not happy. When he walked along the streets people drew away from him as if he were infectious. They classed him with sinners—"publicans and sinners"—and the priests would scarcely allow him to attend the synagogue.

As nobody else would have anything to do with them, the tax-gatherers formed a set of their own. I have no doubt that Zacchæus had often heard some of his fellow-publicans talk of Jesus, the Man who was friendly to publicans and sinners. Perhaps the disciple Matthew, who had also been a publican, was a friend of Zacchæus.

One day Zacchæus heard that Jesus was passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. He was very anxious to see this Man who was kind to tax-gatherers, and he hastened to the road along which He was to pass.

Now Jesus was accompanied by a big crowd and Zacchæus was a very small man, so the boys and girls can guess what happened. You have sometimes stood in a crowd to watch a procession, or to see the King or some other important person, and you know how difficult it is to get a view of anything because of the big people in front of you. Perhaps some kind, thoughtful person has noticed your difficulty and said to those before you, "Will you make room for this little boy or this little girl?" And nobody objected to letting you to the front, because they could easily see over your head.

But no one would make room for Zacchæus, because he was so much disliked; and the poor little man simply could not see a thing. He craned his head this way and that; he stood on tip-toe, and dodged from one side to the other of those in front of him; but it was no use.

Then a brilliant idea came to him. Some distance along the road stood a large sycomore tree. He would run on ahead and climb that, and so he would get a good view of Christ.

Perhaps some of you think, Well, he would have to be a jolly good climber to get up a sycomore tree in a hurry! The trunk is so high before you reach the branches, and there is nothing knobbly to get a foothold on. But the Syrian sycomore is not the tree we know by that name. It is really the Egyptian fig tree, and its branches grow low down, and spread far out on every side. It is very often planted by the wayside, and the branches spread out over the road. So you see what a splendid tree it would be from which to get a view.

Well, Zacchæus ran on ahead and climbed up into this tree. It was not a very dignified thing for a man of his age and position to do, but the publican did not care so long as he could get a glimpse of the Man he had set his heart on seeing. You may imagine how excited he felt as the crowd drew nearer and he was able to distinguish the face of Jesus.

Then all of a sudden Jesus stopped just beneath the tree. He looked up; He spoke; He called Zacchæus

by name! "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." The poor little man could scarcely believe his ears. To think that out of all the people in Jericho, Jesus should have chosen him, a publican, to be His host! There were many who would have been pleased to have Him as their guest, but He had asked shelter of a tax-gatherer!

How proud Zacchæus was to take Jesus home with Him! He had sought a passing glimpse of Christ, and Christ was honouring him with His company. The crowd were scowling now. They were putting their heads together and whispering that Jesus had gone to be the guest of a man that was a sinner. Zacchæus did not mind their taunts. He had met with Someone who believed in him, and he was the happiest man in Jericho that day.

So Jesus went home with Zacchæus. He spoke kindly to him, He trusted him, He never once blamed him for the life that he had led. He treated him as if he were a good and honourable man. And Zacchæus' heart was touched. He knew that he had not always been the man he ought to have been, that he had often been unjust and exacted more than his due. He felt ashamed of himself, for Christ had evidently made a mistake. Jesus was thinking that he was a good man. At last the tax-gatherer could bear it no longer. He must let this Friend know what kind of man he really was. And with the desire to confess everything came the wish to lead a better life, to be worthy of Christ's friendship.

So he stood up and made a clean breast of it. He promised to try and make up for what he had done by giving half his goods to the poor, and restoring fourfold all that he had got by unfair means. This was no boast. It was a humble desire to make up in some small measure for all the wrong that he had done. In promising that he would return four times as much as he had taken wrongfully, Zacchæus was showing how very black he thought himself, for that was what the Law required of the very worst and lowest kind of thief. The Law was quite satisfied if men like Zacchæus returned what they had taken and a fifth part more.

How pleased Jesus must have been! You can hear the joy ringing in His voice as He says, "To-day is salvation come to this house. . . . For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Wouldn't you have been proud to be Zacchæus that day? Wouldn't you have liked to have Jesus staying with you and speaking such kind words to you? Wouldn't you like if Jesus came here to-day and asked to stay with you? Well Jesus *is* here to-day, although we cannot see Him, and He wants to stay with you—in the house of your heart. He is saying to you just as He said to Zacchæus long, long ago, "To-day I must abide at thy house." And if you invite Him in He will make a splendid man, a noble woman, of you; for it is Jesus alone who understands all about us, and who knows how to make the best of the best in us.

JUST A PENNY.

Shew me a penny.—Luke xx. 24.

I EXPECT there are a good many copies of our text in church to-day. For the text is an old and useful friend. We meet him every day and he is quite a frequent visitor to church. Now if you happen to have a copy in your pocket will you take it out and look at it; for a penny is quite an interesting thing when you examine it.

If your penny happens to be a new one (coined since 1911), you will see, on one side, the head of King George V. looking towards the left. Round the head there is a Latin inscription: "GEORGIVS V DEI GRA: BRITT: OMN: REX FID: DEF: IND: IMP:" The first word is the Latin form of George. "DEI GRA:" is short for *Dei Gratia*, "by the grace of God." The next three words mean "King of all the Britains"—not just Great Britain and Ireland, but the larger Britain beyond the seas. "FID: DEF:" stands for "defender of the faith," and this part of the inscription has an interesting history. It was given to Henry VIII. by Pope Leo X. in the year 1521, as a reward for writing a book called "The Defence of the Seven Sacraments." In this book King Henry championed the cause of Pope

Leo against Martin Luther. Many of us have forgotten the origin of the title, but there it remains to this day; and our later British sovereigns have borne it much more worthily than ever King Henry did.

The last two words of the inscription are a contraction for Emperor of India. You will find them on the Edward VII. pennies and on the later Queen Victoria pennies but not on the earlier Victorian pennies. The reason for this is that the die with which these earlier pennies were stamped was made before Queen Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India.

The Edward VII. pennies are the same as the George V. ones except that the head looks towards the right instead of towards the left. It is the custom to reverse the direction of the head with each new sovereign; so Queen Victoria looks towards the left, King Edward towards the right, and King George towards the left again.

Now turn your penny over. On this side we have a picture of Britannia ruling over the waves. In her right hand she holds a shield which bears the design of the Union Jack, and in her left a three-pronged spear called a trident. The trident was the symbol of authority of Neptune, the Roman God of the seas, and the whole picture of Britannia is meant to represent Britain as mistress of the seas.

If you happen to have one of the earlier Victorian pennies you will see a little picture of Eddystone lighthouse to the left of Britannia and a tiny ship in full sail to the right, but these have been omitted in the later pennies.

Below the picture of Britannia you will find the year in which the penny was coined. In the William IV. penny the date was left out and in its place was a representation of the rose, the thistle, and the shamrock —the emblems of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

The penny has a very interesting history. It was introduced into England more than eleven hundred years ago. In those days, as you know, England was divided into several small kingdoms, and the ruler of one of these kingdoms, King Offa of Mercia, first introduced the penny. This penny was made of silver and he copied it from a coin which had been made some years before by Pippin, the father of Charlemagne.

For many centuries the silver penny remained practically the only coin in use. There were no halfpence or farthings till the reign of Edward I.; before that, if you wanted to buy something which cost a halfpenny or a farthing you halved or quartered your penny.

Silver pennies were coined until the reign of Charles II. Then copper halfpence were minted, and henceforth the silver pennies were made only for Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, when the King gives away money to as many poor people as he is years old.

Although copper halfpence were coined from the time of Charles II. copper pence were not made till the year 1797. They were larger and heavier than our pennies. In 1860 the pennies were reduced to the

size we know, and a little tin and zinc were mixed with the copper to make bronze; so our modern pennies are really made of bronze, not of pure copper.

Perhaps you may wonder what the penny of our text was like. It was the silver Roman penny or *denarius* which every Jew had to pay as a tax to the Roman government. In value it was equal to about 9½d. of our money. On one side the coin bore the head or "image" of Tiberius Cæsar, the reigning Roman Emperor, and round the edge was the "superscription": "Tiberius Cæsar, the son of the deified Augustus, (himself) Augustus." On the reverse side was a picture of Livia the Emperor's mother seated, and holding a flower in her right hand and a sceptre in her left. So the Roman penny looked not at all unlike our British one with the King's head on one side and Britannia on the other.

Now the Jews hated to pay the tribute money; they hated to feel they were under the rule of Rome, and they declared that God was their only King. So when the Pharisees wanted to catch Jesus in some of His words they hit upon a very crafty plan. They brought with them some of the Herodians, the supporters of King Herod who ruled the country for the Roman Emperor, and they asked Jesus whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not. Now they knew that if Jesus answered "It is lawful" He would offend the people; and if He answered, "It is unlawful," the Herodians might hand Him over as a traitor to the

civil powers. But Jesus said neither. He said, "Shew me a penny: bring me a piece of the tribute money." And when they brought it He asked, "Whose image and superscription is this?" They were obliged to answer, "Cæsar's"; then He said, "Render (that is, "give back") unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Give Cæsar his due. But don't forget to give God his due too.

Boys and girls, we too bear an image and superscription. The image that we bear is the likeness of God Himself, for He made us in His own image. And the superscription is just the words "Made for God." Whether we will or not we are carrying about with us God's image and superscription. Are we rendering unto God the things that are God's? Are we giving God His due?

MASTER COLD-RICE.

He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.—Luke xxii. 26.

In a royal or titled family it makes a big difference whether you are born first or second. The king's eldest son succeeds to the throne. The eldest son of a nobleman gets the title and the largest share of the estates when his father dies, while the younger sons may have a very much smaller share, and be even rather poor. In families that have not titles and property there is not much difference between older and younger children. Indeed the younger children often have the best time, because the eldest is expected to help to take care of them and to be responsible for them.

But in some countries it is different. In Japan, where they have rules for everything, they have very decided rules for the position of the different members of the family. The Japanese are a very polite nation, and are very particular about proper behaviour, not only in society, but at home. As soon as a baby can run about he is taught good manners. He learns how to bow properly, and how to behave with respect to his elders. And he has a great many elders, for there the

members of the family live together even after they are grown up and married and have children of their own. The wives must obey the husbands, and all the women in the family must obey all the men. Not only must the children obey their grandparents and parents, and all the older people of the family—the aunts and uncles—but the younger brother must obey the elder brother, and the younger sister the elder sister.

Even in small things the younger must always give in to the elder, and at meals must be helped last. But the very little children are not obliged to wait. So a curious name is given in Japan to the second son. He is called "Master Cold-Rice." This is because it is supposed that as he has to wait till all his elders and also the babies have been helped, his rice will not be very hot when he gets it.

Now there is a little parable in this name. In every family there are times when one must give way to another, and be content with the second best instead of the best. This is what we may call eating cold rice.

If you notice you will very often find that in some families one boy or girl never offers to give up to others, and is never expected to do it. Why? Because everybody knows that he will make himself so disagreeable that they would rather make a sacrifice than bear his crossness and unpleasantness. Perhaps there is a picnic or an excursion. Everybody cannot go. But nobody supposes that he will be the one to stay.

If he is playing a game, he is never pleased unless he has the leading part. At table he wants the nicest of everything. He always has the most comfortable chair, and he demands the first turn to read the new magazine. It becomes a family habit to let him have what he wants, because it is easier to do so than to make him give up. But he is not a boy anybody loves. He grows more and more selfish, always grasping at what he wants, and never thinking of others. He may succeed in life, but it will be a poor kind of success, not worth having, and he will have few friends.

Now, it is worth while thinking who generally eats cold rice in your house. You will notice that there is one person who is always ready to give up. If anyone has to stay behind, she thinks she does not want to go. If there is anything you like very much, she likes you to have her share too. And you will notice that, as often as not, that person is Mother.

But is it right that the unselfish people should always have to make the sacrifices? There will always be times when *somebody* must do it, but in future, instead of saying, "I don't see why *I* should have to do that," suppose you say, "Somebody must do it, why should not I?" Take your turn at being Master Cold-Rice.

THE MAN WHO LOST A LITTLE AND GAINED MUCH.

He touched his ear, and healed him.—Luke xxii. 51.

THIS is one of the most wonderful miracles that Christ performed, and the wonderful thing about it is that it was quite unsought. In one sense Christ performed a far more marvellous miracle when He restored Lazarus from the dead or healed the lepers, but in these cases somebody prayed to Him for His aid. Here the miracle was performed upon a man who was Christ's enemy, and who was even at that moment treasuring in his heart feelings of bitter hatred towards Him.

What do we know of this man whom Jesus healed? We are told that he was the bond-servant or slave of Caiaphas, the high priest, and that his name was Malchus. That is all the actual information we have, but we can pretty well guess what kind of man he was.

Malchus was a bond-servant. He had never known what real freedom was. Men had mistrusted him and looked down upon him, and their suspicion and scorn had probably bred in him a spirit of cunning. But he was clever, and he had managed to get into favour with

Caiaphas, who was a cruel and crafty man. He had very likely become confidential servant to the high priest. Perhaps he had helped him to carry out his wicked schemes. He had probably been sent by Caiaphas to the Garden that night as a spy in order to see that the arrest was properly made. At the same time he took the opportunity of giving expression to his own hatred of Jesus. The fact that Peter attacked him shows that he must have insulted Christ in some way.

This, then, was the man whom Jesus healed. We all know the story. We can picture the scene—the dark garden lit up by the weird glare of torches, the soldiers and police armed with their swords and staves, the rough mob in the background swaying to and fro, Malchus with his face of hatred pushing to the front, the excited disciples, Christ, calm and kindly amidst the throng.

We do not know how Malchus insulted Jesus. He may have snatched a cord from his companions and endeavoured to bind Him. He may have aimed a blow, or merely gibed. Whatever he did, it was enough to fire the impulsive anger of Peter. In a flash he drew his sword, and with the intention of slaying the man who had insulted his Lord, he succeeded in severing his ear.

But Christ rebuked Peter. "Put up again thy sword into its place," He said; "thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" What

were eleven poorly-armed disciples against a company of soldiers and an angry mob? Christ was able, if need be, to call down help from above. But that was not the will of His Father. His kingdom was to be no earthly one, won by the sword, but a heavenly one, gained by love. So Jesus touched the wounded ear and made it whole again.

We wonder what Malchus' later history was. We are not told, but we can imagine it. One thing is certain—he could never be quite the same again, for Christ had touched him. For the first time somebody had done him a kindness, and that person was the one whom he had injured, the one from whom he least deserved kindness. Christ touched him, and I like to think that, at that touch, all his hatred passed away and gave place to humble gratitude and shame. Christ healed him, and I like to think that, in that moment, his spirit as well as his body was made whole, that the bitterness of a lifetime vanished before a love so big and so forgiving.

And if Christ could forgive Malchus, He can forgive us too. Sometimes we get the idea into our heads that we must be good before Christ will have anything to do with us. That is quite a mistaken idea; it is quite the opposite of what Christ Himself told us: and the longer we hold it, the longer we shall stay away from Him.

Once upon a time there was a little girl, six years old, who had said the same prayer every night ever

since she could remember—the prayer her mother had taught her. But one night when she had finished that prayer her mother told her she might say one of her very own. What do you think she said? "Dear Jesus, love me when I am naughty."

Wise little girl! She knew just what she wanted and needed. But perhaps she didn't know that that is just what Jesus does. He loves us when we are naughty, loves us when we are hurting Him, loves us, forgives us, and makes us good again.

HOW TO FOLLOW.

Peter followed afar off.—Luke xxii. 54.

WHO is your favourite apostle? Most people have one. A great many choose the apostle John. They say that John was the apostle who was most like Jesus Himself. He followed his great Master most closely. He was the apostle of love, and he was the apostle whom Jesus loved best.

Now, to give away a secret, I have always had a great weakness for the apostle Peter. Poor Peter! He was so well-meaning and so blundering. He was always putting his foot in it. He was always getting into difficulties because of his warm heart and his impulsive tongue. And he was always so sorry when he had done wrong. I think if John was first in Christ's heart, Peter must have been a good second.

I said that, of the disciples, John followed Christ most closely. That is true in more senses than one. When we speak of one person following another, we sometimes mean that he is literally following a few paces behind on the street, but just as often we mean that the person we speak of admires the

other and tries to copy him and imitate him in so far as he can.

To-day I want to tell you how following at a distance, in the literal sense of the word, caused the apostle Peter to get into terrible trouble.

You remember the crowd of Jews and Roman soldiers who burst into the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. You remember how, when they led Him away prisoner to the high priest's house, all the scared and horrified disciples fled—all except two. One, whose name we are not told, followed Christ closely, and because he was known to the high priest got admission to the high priest's palace. That disciple is supposed to have been the apostle John. The other followed afar off. It was the apostle Peter. And just because he followed at a safe distance he got into trouble. If Peter had been taken prisoner along with Christ he would have been bold as a lion, but because he got separated from his Master he committed a sin which he regretted all the rest of his days. He turned coward and denied that he knew Christ at all.

It happened like this. Christ was taken into the high priest's house for examination. This house, like many Eastern houses of to-day, was built round four sides of a courtyard. The courtyard was open to the sky and it was entered by an archway in one of the walls. In the archway was a gate which was opened and closed by a portress. John, who had entered the

courtyard with Christ, noticed Peter hanging about outside the archway, and asked the portress to let him in. It was a chilly night in April, a fire had been lit in the centre of the court, and Peter, who was shivering from both cold and misery, drew near to warm his hands at the glow. Round the fire were gathered some of the men who had helped to arrest Jesus. They took no special notice of Peter, but, as the flames leapt up, the blaze shone on Peter's face. The portress who had let him enter, and who was going off duty, happened to pass at that moment. She paused and pointed to Peter. "That man is one of the prisoner's followers!" said she. In a moment, in a pang of fear, came Peter's answer, short and quick, "Woman, I know him not."

Sick with horror at his denial, the ashamed apostle crept into the dark shadow of the archway. But even there he was not safe. The new portress and a friend were talking together over the arrest, and the friend looked sharply at Peter lurking in the shadow. "Surely," said he, "you are one of the prisoner's disciples." And again Peter rapped out, almost without thinking, "Man, I am not."

Once more he felt sick with shame, and once more he stepped away from the danger spot. Where could he go? It was growing chillier as morning drew near, and with a kind of reckless despairing what-does-it-matter-now-what-happens feeling the miserable apostle joined himself once more to the crowd round the fire. He plunged boldly into the conversation, ready to

brazen out the whole thing; but he forgot his strong north-country accent, he forgot that his was a face easily remembered, and soon the men were taunting him and badgering him. "Why, of course you were with Him!" cried one; "I saw you with Him in the garden," said another. And Peter, mad with fear and misery and despair all mixed together, answered with an oath, "I tell you I know not the man."

His oath was still ringing through the courtyard when Christ, who was being led away from His examination before the high priest, passed the group at the fire. He heard Peter's oath, He heard his words, and He turned and looked at him. And suddenly Peter realized that the cock was crowing, and that Christ had prophesied the night before that ere the cock crew twice Peter would deny Him thrice. And that gentle, sad, reminding look from Jesus broke Peter's heart, and he went out and wept bitterly.

That is the story of Peter's denial, boys and girls. And as I said before, it all arose from Peter's following afar off.

It is a dangerous thing to follow afar off. One of the chaplains who was at the front during the Great War tells in one of his books how the men, when they went into the trenches at night, had to keep in touch with each other and follow the guide closely lest they should lose their way. One night the leading man of a half-battalion lost touch with the man in front of him. As a result he took the wrong turning and the

rest of the battalion followed in platoons. Round another turning they went and round another, till, without knowing it, they worked round in a circle to where they had started. The first man caught the sound of the footsteps of the last man and round again they sped. And it was a full hour till that half-battalion discovered that, like a playful kitten, it had been chasing its own tail.

Something like that happens to those who lose touch with Christ. If they do not openly deny their Master like Peter, they spend their lives to no purpose. They never do the splendid work they might, because they are not in touch with Christ. At best they are following afar off.

Shall I tell you how we ought to follow Christ if we want to be truly His disciples? Let me tell you by a story.

In a certain Scottish village there lived a quaint little maiden who, when she went out with her mother, used to walk, not side by side with her, but immediately behind. By and by people began to notice that the little lassie always tried to plant her feet exactly in the footprints of her mother. Often it meant a long step for her short legs, but she managed it somehow. At last, one day, someone who understood little girls and how to talk to them, asked her why she did it. She hung down her head and whispered shyly, "Because I lo'e her weel."

Dear children, that is the whole secret of following

closely and following faithfully. Love Christ well. If you love Him well, and keep close by Him, no evil can harm you, and, God helping you, you will be spared the temptation that came to Peter because he followed afar off.

THE WORLD THAT JESUS MADE.

All things were made by him.—John i. 3.

THIS looks a very easy text. There are only six words in it and the longest one is only six letters. Even the tiniest person here could learn it in a few minutes. But sometimes the texts that look the simplest are the hardest to understand, so I want you to do a bit of thinking with me this morning.

What does this text really mean? Well, we shall get at its real meaning better if we put the word "through" in the place of "by." Now let us read it again that way, "All things were made through him." But who is the "him" through whom all things were made? If you look at the first verse of the chapter you will see that it is someone whom St. John calls "the Word." So let us read our text again and put in "the Word" instead of "him," and now we have—"All things were made through the Word."

But still we have to ask, Who is "the Word"? And that is the most difficult question to answer, and the most difficult answer to understand. I think you will understand it if I put it in this way. "The Word" is a name given to Jesus before He came to earth at all,

when He lived with God from all eternity. So our text reads now, "All things were made through Jesus Christ"; and that just means that Jesus was God's agent in making the world. God worked through Jesus. Jesus had something to do with the creating of every tiny speck or atom. "Without Him was not anything [not one single tiny thing] made that hath been made."

And so you see this is Jesus' world as well as God's, and I want you to remember that always and look at the world always in that way.

Will you think about three kinds of things that Jesus helped God to make?

1. First He helped to make *the world of Nature.* It was through Him that God made the grand old hills, the blue sky, and the glorious sea. It was through Him that God made the sun to shine by day and the stars to twinkle so merrily by night. It was through Him that God made the trees to give us shade, the grass to form a nice soft carpet for our feet, the corn to feed us, the flowers to make us glad.

There is nothing that God made and Jesus helped to make that is not wonderful and beautiful. Sometimes we hear of clever engineers inventing some wonderful new piece of machinery, but nothing that has ever been invented is half so marvellous as just a little wayside flower, and nobody but a God of love could have made it so perfect and so beautiful.

So when you look at anything beautiful in Nature,

I want you to think, "That is just another proof of God's love to us in Christ Jesus." For Nature has a great secret which she is telling every day to those who have ears to hear. The birds sing it, the brooks chant it, the summer winds in the trees whisper it—God is love. Are you listening to the secret?

2. Again, Jesus helped to make *the animal world.* And so when you hurt or torment any animal you are really hurting Jesus, for He loves all the creatures He has helped to make.

There is a beautiful story about Jesus which was found in an old document. It tells how Christ and His disciples were once crossing some mountains when they came upon a man with a pack mule. The path was steep, the mule was heavily laden and had fallen down under its burden. The owner was beating it unmercifully till it bled. Jesus stopped and asked the man if he did not see that the creature was suffering and that its burden was too heavy for it. But the man replied that he had paid a good price for the mule, and he could do what he liked with his own. The disciples also affirmed that he had paid well for the beast. Then Jesus asked them if they did not hear its cries, but their ears were deaf to the cries of the suffering animal. So Christ came and touched the animal and healed its sore wounds. And He sent the man on his way with the words, "Now go on, and beat it no more, that you also may find mercy."

So Jesus cares for the sufferings of a mule; yes, He

cares for the sufferings of a cat, or a sparrow, or even a fly. And when we allow ourselves to torment any of His creatures, no matter how humble they may be, we are giving way to the lowest bit of our nature, the bit least like Jesus, and we are hurting Him more than we can tell.

3. Once more, Jesus helped to make *the world of men and women and boys and girls.* God made us through Jesus Christ, so we ought to respect ourselves and be worthy of our Maker. God took infinitely more pains to make us than He did to make the hills and the trees and the fields, the animals and the birds. He made us in His own image, like Himself.

But we have all been foolish. We have allowed sin to mar that beautiful image until sometimes it is impossible to recognize in it the likeness of the Maker. We have all spoiled it to some degree—some of us more, some of us less—and nothing we can do will ever restore it to its beauty and perfection. Then how are we to get it put right again? There is just one way. If God made us through Jesus then it is only through Him that He can remake us, only through Him that He can undo all the harm we have done, wash away all the stains and make the ugly places beautiful again. Are you going to be content to keep your image stained and marred, or are you going to let Jesus make it beautiful again?

A TRUE HERO.

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.—John i. 6.

THE house into which this great man of the Bible was born reminds one of the homes of some of the great men of Scotland. There was a famous writer and thinker of last generation of whom I am sure many of you have heard. His name was Carlyle. I thought of him as I read about Zacharias and Elisabeth, the father and mother of John. I think this was because Carlyle grew up under a father and mother who, like those two good people, were always very much in earnest about things. He often heard them speaking about God, and as he looked upon his father with great reverence, and upon his mother with love, he kept constantly thinking of what they said. When he grew up, he felt that he had a message for the world; and he really had. But it was neither such a beautiful nor such a solemn message as the one John the Baptist brought from his home in the hill-country of Judæa.

John's father was an old priest, and you know that his mother's name was Elisabeth. They were very good people, and they had a happy home; but for a long time there was no sound of a child's voice in it.

Like all Eastern parents, they longed with a great longing for a baby boy, and they kept praying earnestly that God would send them one. At last there came a message to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord: "Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." And the angel added, "Your boy will be a great man; he will help to make the world better, and prepare the way for the Messiah."

When the baby came, the kinsfolk and neighbours of the old couple gathered together and rejoiced over God's goodness to them. I daresay some of you have been at christening parties where there was laughing and singing. Those good people of long ago were happy over this baby, but it was with a solemn sort of joy. If they had music at their gathering, it would be the chanting of psalms. God and His worship was the one thing in their minds.

In the Bible there is a great deal said about the birth of John the Baptist. Then we hear nothing further of him until he is a man, living in the wilderness of Judæa. He did not live exactly like a hermit, but he led a very simple life far away from the town. He constantly thought about the promises of God to his people of which he had heard so much at home. When he was thirty years of age "the word of God came" to him, and he felt he could not keep silence. Away he went to give his message to the people. What preaching John's was! The fame of it attracted great crowds. There was a revival; every one was asking his neighbour, "Have you heard the preacher?

I am going to be baptized—and so am I—and so am I." It was a wonderful movement. What did he preach about, do you think? It was about sin, its punishment, and its forgiveness. His great cry was "Repent!"

Meanwhile Jesus had been toiling away in the workshop at Nazareth. But a day came when He offered Himself to John for baptism. Then John realized that he was in the presence of his Master. His appearance, His answers—everything made the Baptist feel that Jesus, and no other, was God's beloved Son, come to deliver men from sin. John at once stood aside in the work. "I was but His forerunner," he said—"the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Many of John's followers and admirers left him to follow Christ. The crowds who had hung on his preaching dwindled away. They preferred the gentle words of Jesus to the prophet's stern cry of "Repent!"

Those who are always ready to repeat unpleasant things came and told John of the success of the wonderful new Teacher, hoping no doubt to see the Baptist's eyes flash in jealous anger. But they got a sad disappointment. All he said was something like this: "Jesus is greater than I. God has given Him greater gifts. It is only right that men should follow Him. He must increase, but I must decrease."

John's answer was noble, so noble that a famous preacher has said, "I would rather have had the grace

from God to say that than have been the greatest man ever born."

You know how it is with yourselves, boys and girls. If you are specially good at essays and another pupil in your class is not good at essays but a don at arithmetic—that's all right. But suppose you have been praised for your essays every week till you are in danger of swelled head, and you think nobody can write essays like yourself. And suppose, one day, a new pupil arrives on the scene, and the following week the new pupil's essay is praised and read aloud to the class and nothing is said about yours. And suppose this goes on week after week. How do you feel then? If you can say, like John the Baptist, "I truly rejoice in that boy's or that girl's success," then you are worth knowing, and I should be proud to shake hands with you.

Yes, John did a noble thing when he rejoiced in Christ's advancement. How did he do it? If we find out his secret perhaps we shall be able to copy his example. I'll tell you how he did it. He did it by thinking so much of Christ that he quite forgot himself. That is the best and surest cure for the small or jealous feelings that attack us as we go through life. If you forget yourself completely, how can you possibly think of yourself at the same time? And jealousy, like many other horrid feelings, just springs from thinking too much about oneself.

Once a young singer was going to appear at an important concert. She had a beautiful voice and she

knew her song perfectly, but, as the concert day drew near, she found herself getting more and more nervous. She happened to mention this to a friend.

"What are you singing?" he asked.

"Gounod's *The King of Love*," she replied.

"Ah!" said he, "that is a very beautiful song! I'll tell you how to sing it. Forget yourself. Think of your song and the good it may do. There may be someone in the hall whom that song will help. And think of Christ. He too is listening. You are singing for Him."

That was good advice, the very best anybody could give or take. Think of others, boys and girls. Think, above all, of Christ. Then thought of self will vanish quite away. And you, even you too, will be worthy to take a place near the hero of to-day's sermon. You will be imitators of John the Baptist.

THE GREATEST DISCOVERY.

What seek ye?—John i. 38.

How often do you hear people say, when you are turning everything in the house upside down, "What are you looking for?" Generally it is only a ball or a cap that you are searching for, because you did not put it away in its proper place. Possibly you are not so frank as the little girl who replied, "A spanking, I believe."

Now, if it is not something you have lost, there is a great pleasure in hunting for things, and a still greater in discovering them. Whether it is birds, or plants, or butterflies, or stamps, or picture post-cards, there is joy in seeking and finding.

Perhaps some of you are more ambitious. What you would really like to do is to go on a voyage of discovery, and find something quite new, a new island for instance, since all the continents have been picked up already. Or, possibly, a gold mine, or a river which could be called by your name. Well, perhaps you may. All the discoveries have by no means been made. There are still parts of the world almost unexplored—such as the Antarctic regions, or the centre of the great continents. There are fine fields still in Africa,

and Australia, and Asia. There are rivers yet to trace, mountains to measure, oceans to chart, and new forms of living creatures to discover. Then there are wonderful secrets waiting to be found out in mechanics and chemistry. We want to discover a new fuel to use when our coal is exhausted, and some way of making ships unsinkable, and a host of other things.

All these discoveries are waiting for the young people now growing up, but they will not be made by accident. Columbus found America by going to look for it, and the answers to these problems will be found by those who seek diligently for them.

There is a story about an old Greek philosopher that he went about the city with a lighted lantern in the daytime, and when he was asked what he was looking for, he said, "I am seeking a *man*." You see what he meant. There were plenty of men there, of course, but to find a man worth calling a man among them was not so easy. He had to be hunted for carefully.

A man is a fine thing to discover, but there is a still greater discovery, which each of you must make for himself. There was a famous doctor in Edinburgh, called Sir James Simpson, who discovered chloroform. You know what chloroform is. It sends people into a nice sleep while the doctor is operating on them, and they don't feel that he is hurting them one bit. It has saved thousands of lives, and it is one of the greatest discoveries ever made in medicine. Yet, when Sir James Simpson was asked what he considered his

greatest discovery, he said, "The greatest discovery I ever made was that Jesus Christ was my Saviour."

Boys and girls, discover what you like, but do not omit that greatest discovery. No other discovery is to be compared with it. Suppose it were possible for one person to make all the discoveries that are to be made in the world, and suppose you were that person and had made them all. What then? Though these discoveries had brought you both wealth and fame, you would be nothing but a poor miserable creature if you had not made the greatest discovery of all.

Set out to-day to seek Christ. He is not hard to find. He has been seeking you since the day you came into the world. Every day He is knocking, knocking at the door of your heart. But He can't get farther until you open the door. Yes, that is all the distance you have to go to find Him—just to the door of your heart. Then open that door this morning, and let the Saviour in.

TWO INVITATIONS.

Come, and ye shall see.—John i. 39.
Come and see.—John i. 46.

I WANT to speak to-day about seeing things for yourself. Whether is it nicer to see a thing for yourself or just to hear about it? Well I think you will all agree with me that it is much more satisfactory to see it for yourself.

Just suppose a very jolly circus came to your neighbourhood and some of your school friends went to see it, and came back and told you all about it. It would be very interesting to hear about all the funny things the clown did, and the wonderful feats the "strong man" performed, and the clever way in which lovely ladies rode on beautiful horses; but would that be as good as going to the circus and seeing them for yourself? Not a bit of it! If you went you would know about them in quite a different way. You would see them, not through other people's eyes, but with your own.

Or suppose your big brother went to London and came back and told you about the grand sights he had seen—the Tower, and the Houses of Parliament, and Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's, not to speak of

the crowds of people, and the splendid shops, and the beautiful parks, and the Zoo—would you rather just hear about them all from him, or go to see them for yourself? Why, you haven't a scrap of doubt as to which would be best.

Now it isn't always possible to go and see for ourselves. Sometimes we have to be content with hearing about things, but there are some things we are all invited to go and see, and they are some of the best things.

In the first chapter of St. John's Gospel there are two invitations to come and see. They were both accepted, and the people who accepted them found the very best thing in the world.

The first invitation was given by Jesus. You remember how He was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The next day John was standing with two of his disciples—Andrew and John—when Jesus went past, and the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Immediately the two disciples followed Jesus. And when Jesus saw them following, He turned and asked, "What seek ye?" They replied, "Master, where abidest thou?" And He said, "Come, and ye shall see." So they went with Him and stayed with Him that day. They went and saw for themselves, they talked with Jesus, they got to know Him, and afterwards Andrew went and told his brother Simon, "We have found the Christ."

The other invitation was given by Philip to his friend Nathanael. Philip had just become a disciple of Jesus, and he went straight to tell his friend that he had found in Jesus of Nazareth the wonderful Saviour whose coming Moses and the prophets had foretold. But when Nathanael heard the word "Nazareth" he was very doubtful. "Could any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he asked, "out of Nazareth, that little country town where the people had such rough manners! Besides, had it not been prophesied that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem? How came He to be living in Nazareth?" Philip did not stop to argue. He just said, "Come and see." So Nathanael went with him, and before Jesus had spoken many words to him, he knew that Philip was right; and very reverently he said, "Thou art the Son of God."

So the two stories are much alike. "Come and see." They came and saw, and they found Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus is still giving that invitation to everybody—"Come and see." "Come and find out all you want to know about Me. Come and let Me bear your burdens. Come and let Me carry you in My arms, safe from all dangers, as I used to carry the little children when I was on earth." You have heard about Him from your parents and your minister and your teacher, but that isn't enough. You must go and see Him for yourself.

And how are you to come? Well, you haven't far to go, for Jesus is just beside you—very, very near to you. He is waiting for you to come, and all you have to do is just to put your hand in His, and let Him lead you. He will show you all His love and all His goodness, and at last He will take you home to the happy place He has prepared for you, where you will see Him face to face.

ROCK PEOPLE.

Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.—John i. 42 (AV).

To-day we are going to have a talk about rocks and rock people.

Did you know that there was a man in the Bible whose name just means "a rock"? That man was Peter. His real name was Simon, but Jesus called him "Peter," the "rock man." Those of you who are learning French know that "*pierre*" is the word for "a stone" and that it is also the French form of our name "Peter."

But perhaps you will say that there is no mention of Peter in our text. Oh yes, there is. Jesus spoke a language called Aramaic. And "Cephas" is just the Aramaic word for "Peter."

Peter was the "rock man" among the disciples, but he was not a bit like a rock when Christ first met him. No, he was rash, and hot-headed, and impulsive, and unreliable. That was what all his friends had found him; but Jesus looked on him, He gazed right into his heart, and He saw there the kind of man Simon could be, and would be; and He said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas: thou shalt be a rock."

The thing we all seem to remember best about Peter is how he denied Christ, and we think he was not very like a rock then. No, Peter had not quite grown into a rock then, but he was fast growing, and I think when Jesus looked on him and Peter went out and wept bitterly that look of Jesus was one of the big last things that firmed him into the splendid rock he became.

If you want to see Peter as the "rock man" you must look into the Acts of the Apostles. There you will find him bravely facing the Jewish Council who had been the means of getting Jesus put to death, boldly declaring himself to be a disciple of that same Jesus whom they had slain. You will find him ready to be spokesman for the other disciples, ready to go to prison, and, if need be, to death, for Jesus' sake.

Now Jesus had need of rock men in Simon's time, and He has need of rock men to-day. What does it mean to be a rock? What are the things that specially strike you about a rock, the things that we should copy?

1. The first thing that strikes you is that a rock is a very firm thing. Rock people should be *firm*. Those of you who have been to the seaside know how firm a rock is. When you are digging in the sand your spade strikes something hard. You kneel down and try to pull it out, thinking it is just an ordinary stone. You pull and pull, but it won't move. Why? Because

it is not a stone at all; it is a rock with its foundations far, far down.

There is one way especially in which we should be firm. And that is by being decided. It is a great thing to know your own mind.

There is a man in one of Dickens's novels who would never give his opinion about anything. When people asked him what he thought, he always referred them to his wife. "Ask her," he would say, "ask Mrs. Bagnet; she knows my opinion. Tell 'em, my dear, what I think." Wouldn't it be funny if we all went about saying that sort of thing? And yet there are quite a number of people in the world like Mr. Bagnet. They don't seem to have any mind of their own, or the mind they do have is being carried about in other people's pockets. They cannot decide the smallest thing without consulting somebody. Of course, I don't mean to say that we should never consult other people. There are times when we must decide big things, and then it is well to have the advice of someone older and wiser than ourselves. But it is good to be independent about the little things. People who don't know their own mind are a great bother to their friends, and they are very apt to go with the crowd, whether the crowd be right or wrong.

2. There is another thing which strikes you about a rock, and that is its strength. Rock people should be *strong*.

I suppose all boys want to be strong, and it is a fine

thing to see a big, erect, well-developed boy with firm muscles, but it is a finer thing to see a straight, clean, manly boy—a boy who is not ashamed to speak the truth, or look you in the face.

Those who are strong themselves are a support to others. Peter was the one among the disciples who took the stand for the rest. They must have felt that he was a man they could lean upon—a kind of tower of strength. You, too, may be a tower of strength—a help to those who are weak and easily tempted, and who cannot stand by themselves.

During the years 1883–85 a young man named Cyril Digby Buxton played cricket for the University of Cambridge. He was a splendid all-round athlete both at Harrow and at Cambridge. As boy and man he was a tower of strength to his fellows. Cyril Buxton died in his twenty-sixth year. Among his papers was found this letter which had been written to him by a school-fellow when he left Harrow at the age of eighteen or nineteen:

"I couldn't bear saying good-bye to you, old chap, the other day, perhaps for so long, but I hope not. You have been the best friend I ever had, Cyril, and the only one I love as much as my own brother—and even more. I wonder if you noticed any change in me since we came to know each other. It was from knowing you that I came to see how worthless some fellows are. You were always so unselfish and straightforward in everything; and you made me feel that I was exactly the contrary, and that you couldn't care

for me at all unless I improved a bit. So you have done me more good than you can imagine, and I am very much obliged to you for it.

"Now, Cyril, please forgive this rot and don't think me a fool or a hypocrite, for I really mean what I say, and I am one of those chaps who cannot keep their feelings to themselves."

3. One other thing strikes you about a rock, and that is its steadfastness and lastingness. Rock people should be *steadfast and enduring*.

If you go to the seashore you will find that the sand changes with every tide. The sandy shore takes on new shapes, new marks, with each tide that ebbs and flows. But the rocks remain the same. The water may cover them, but when it recedes they are still in the same place. The sand may wash over them, but if you scrape it off they are still the same shape.

Now there are some people like sand. So long as everything goes well, they are all right, but when the tides of trouble or temptation come sweeping over them, they are washed about hither and thither.

At the battle of Waterloo a messenger came to the Duke of Wellington and told him that a certain regiment would be driven back if left unsupported. "Stand firm!" replied the Duke. "But we shall all be killed," said the messenger. "Stand firm!" repeated the Duke. The messenger saluted. "You will find us there," he said. And so he did; but every man was dead at the post of duty!

Boys and girls, can we stand firm at the post of duty, firm in the face of temptation, firm to the very end? There is only one way we can do it—by taking fast hold of the Rock of Ages who stands steadfast and unchangeable through all time.

Just one word more. In the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul is speaking of James and Peter and John, and he says that they were "reputed to be pillars" in the Church. Peter was a rough rock, but he came to be a beautiful, polished pillar on whom others leant. And Christ can do the same for you and for me. He can take us—all weak and unstable as we are—and He can change us into strong, steadfast rocks; and then He can smooth away all the ugly rough corners, and shape us into beautiful pillars fit for His heavenly Kingdom.

WITHOUT GUILE.

Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!—John i. 47.

MANY of you boys and girls have a baby brother or sister. Do you sometimes wonder what they think about? They are taking in the sights that are round about them; the world seems to them just a place to play in. If they be well, they are ready to have everybody round them as playmates. There are no dark corners in their mind; they are what old Scotch people used to call "ae fauld," or one-fold—without guile.

In Nathanael we are introduced to a grown man who was like a child: he had no dark corners in his mind; he was "ae fauld," he was without guile. I can remember that when I was a child a very old man was pointed out to me. "That," said my mother, "is a real Nathanael." I thought of him then as one who was very, very good, and would think no evil of anyone.

Very little is told us of Nathanael in the Bible. We have only a few lines about him; but they are sufficient to set us thinking. Jesus had wonderful words of praise to bestow upon him. "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" He had been

watching Nathanael at a time when he did not know that anyone was looking: he was meditating and praying under a fig tree.

Nathanael doubtless had faults, but Jesus loved him. He may not have been a great man; but it is the case that great men who are good are always guileless, and Nathanael was good. It was said of Gladstone, the great statesman, that he was the most guileless of men. He was as "ae fauld" as a baby. Deep down within him was the heart of a little child.

Guilelessness is the first step towards being good; it is the first step towards being really happy. "No," said a boy, "a lie is never right, for you are always found out, and you almost never feel half as well after it."

That answer reminds me of Mrs. Ewing's story *Jackanapes*, and of Jackanapes himself. Jackanapes had a grandfather who loved him very much. One day he bought a pony for Jackanapes, and the old man wanted a little love from the boy in return. I shall read you a page from Mrs. Ewing's story.

They were sitting in the window in two Chippendale arm-chairs, the General devouring every line of his grandson's face.

"You must love your aunt very much, Jackanapes?"

"I do, sir," said Jackanapes warmly.

"And whom do you love next best to your aunt?"

The ties of blood were pressing very strongly on the General himself, and perhaps he thought of Lollo, the pony. But Love is not bought in a day, even with

fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence. Jackanapes answered quite readily, "The Postman."

Nobody could help loving Jackanapes; he was without guile.

Boys and girls, if you are to grow up good men and women, truth is the one thing needful. Our nation needs those who are true and good. More than once I have heard a mother say, "My boy has never given me a moment's anxiety." She knew he was without guile. Remember that although Jesus Christ was the friend of those who had done wrong and were sorry for it, He hated guile.

Would you like to know more about Nathanael?

It is supposed that he became one of the twelve disciples and that Bartholomew, of whom Matthew, Mark, and Luke speak, was the same man. Bartholomew means just "son of Talmai," and Nathanael's full name may have been "Nathanael, the son of Talmai." So the man without guile most likely became a constant follower of the great Master.

We hear of Nathanael again in the very last chapter of John's Gospel. There we are told that he was one of the seven to whom Christ appeared after the Resurrection. He was one of those who in despair went a-fishing on the Lake of Galilee, hoping thus to dull the ache of their sorrow. And you remember how, when they returned still sad in the morning, they found Christ waiting for them on the shore.

Tradition tells us that Nathanael followed Christ

to the end of his days. He became a great missionary and travelled here and there telling people the story of Jesus. And at the last he is said to have laid down his life in his Master's cause.

Boys and girls, it is easy for those who are guileless to follow Christ and become His friends. What about yourselves? Will you not strive to have the single heart that loves and follows truth, that loves and follows Christ now and for evermore?

THE GIFT OF GOD.

The gift of God.—John iv. 10.

HAVE you ever seen the picture of an Eastern water-carrier? Slung on his back by leather straps is a large water-bottle—not a water-bottle such as we use, but a leather one made out of the skin of a goat. In his hand he carries a shallow cup, and, as he moves along the busy streets, he cries, "The gift of God! The gift of God!"

"The gift of God!" What a splendid name for water!—especially in the East, where water is scarcer and more precious than with us, and where men and women, boys and girls, are thirstier too because of the burning heat. You can imagine that the water-carrier has always plenty of customers.

Now and again some rich man of the East buys up the whole skinful, and sends the carrier through the streets to cry, "The gift of God quite free! Who will take the gift of God?" If the water-carrier had plenty of customers before, I expect he will have crowds now when the water costs nothing at all.

Perhaps Christ was thinking of an Eastern water-carrier when He spoke the words of our text. You remember where and when He spoke them. He was

sitting on the edge of Jacob's well. He had come a very long way, and He was so tired that He found he could go no farther. His disciples had gone on to the village, ten minutes distant, to buy bread, and Christ was waiting their return.

As he sat there, up came a woman from the village to draw water. Christ's throat was parched and dry, and He had nothing to draw water with, so He asked the woman for a drink. It seemed a small thing to ask, but the woman was surprised, for, as it happened, she was a Samaritan, and the Samaritans and the Jews had such a deadly quarrel with each other that even to speak was unusual. So the woman said to Christ, "Why do you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for water?" If she was surprised at Christ's request she was even more surprised at his answer, for this is what He said. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

What did Christ mean when He spoke of "the gift of God" and "living water"? It sounds puzzling, but I think we shall get at the meaning, though we may have to go round about.

Perhaps some of you know that our bodies, though they look so solid, are largely made up of water. The bodies of all animals are the same; and so are plants—only more so. This water gets used up, and we have to add some to replace it. That is why we grow

thirsty, and that is why plants droop when their roots get dry. If we did not drink water, and if the plants did not get moisture, neither we nor they could live.

You know also that these bodies of ours are not our real selves. Your body is not the real you, nor is my body the real me. The real self is within. We can't see it, but it is there. It is the part of us that thinks, and speaks, and acts, and we call it a soul.

As the body grows thirsty so does the soul. What does the soul feel when it is thirsty? Well, it usually has a longing for something, it can't tell what. It has a miserable, unhappy, unsatisfied sort of ache. It tries different things to cure the longing and make it happy. Perhaps it goes in for games or amusements. But though games and amusements are excellent they don't satisfy the thirst of the soul. Perhaps it thinks that success will bring it happiness. It believes that money, and fame, and a beautiful house, and fine clothes is what it needs, so it works hard at school, harder at college, and hardest at business, and it gets all these things. And then it finds they are no good. The aching and the longing are only worse than before.

Boys and girls, it is God who has put that unsatisfied feeling into our souls. He has put it there for the express purpose of drawing us to Him. He is trying all the time to tell us that the wells of the world will never satisfy the thirst of the soul, and that the only thing that will quench it is His gift of "living water." And this gift is just Christ, and the living water is what He brings with Him.

If you take Him and all He brings—eternal love, joy, and peace—nothing else will really count. You will have the great secret of happiness. Your soul will thirst no more, for it will possess a fountain of "living," that is to say, "flowing," water from which it can always drink, and the aching and the longing will be for ever stilled.

And we have nothing to pay for this wonderful water. God gives it to us free. He gives it to us for nothing because Christ has paid the price. He gave His life just that we might have this everlasting happiness and joy. He is standing waiting for us. He wants us to take the gift. All we have to do is to say to Him, "Dear Christ, come into my heart. It is longing for You, and for the living water which You bring."

THE BOOK OF BOOKS.

Search the Scriptures.—John v. 39 (AV).

EVERY boy and girl has a Bible, and some of you here have quite a little library of other books. In these days of abundance of books for young people I often think of a little boy I used to know a very long time ago. His library was contained in a small box that had come from the grocer; it had once been filled with "Hudson's Extract of Soap." His mother had papered it and made it look nice. Every little reward given to him in the form of any kind of book was stored away in that box. *Little Henry and his Bearer Boosey*; *Old Herbert on his Way Home*; *Robinson Crusoe*—he knew these nearly by heart. He had paid a great deal for *Robinson Crusoe*. An operation had been performed on one of his eyes, and *without chloroform*. "If you behave yourself like a man, and don't cry out," said his father, "you'll get a *Robinson Crusoe*." Charlie behaved himself. And let me tell you about *Old Herbert*. On it was the inscription: "Presented to Charles Fraser, at the annual examination of this School, for correctly repeating the 17th chapter of John. March 1855." What a long time ago! and Charlie was just five years

old then. You don't have memory lessons like that nowadays.

Your library may be much fuller than Charlie's; it has certainly cost you less. But I don't suppose many of you keep your Bible in your library. Perhaps you scarcely think of it as a book at all; and yet it is printed just like the others.

As a matter of fact, the Bible is a whole library in itself. It was written not by one man, but by many. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New—sixty-six books in all. Some are very short, others long. They were written by men who lived at different periods in the world's history. Some of those men were shepherds, others were kings, priests, farmers, tentmakers, fishermen. All were good men.

We do not value the Bible and its treasures as we ought. There have been people who, day after day, have walked over fields where gold was buried. They had heard of the gold, yet they did not bother to look for it. They were foolish, just as we are about the Bible.

If we are to discover the treasures in the Bible, we must dig, and continue digging, just as men dig a field in the hope of finding copper, silver, or gold. It is he who perseveres who finds the treasure. We have learned many a Bible verse, and that is a very good thing; but it will do us no good unless we think over it and try to find its meaning. It will then have a special

message for ourselves. Believe me, it is worth while digging for these Bible treasures.

Let me tell you of a little Japanese boy who manfully did his best to dig. He had gone to a mission school, and a Japanese friend gave him the present of a beautifully-bound Bible. Yoshio—that was the little boy's name—thought he had never seen such a beautiful book in his life, and he loved it dearly. Here is what he said about it in his own quaint words.

"From the next day I used to pray to God first, 'Pray, let me understand Thy Holy Book.' And I read it every morning and night. First I started the New Testaments, but many references were on the edges of each page. They all were quoted to the Old Testament. I thought it was better to read from the very beginning of Genesis. So I did."[1]

It is a pity we are not all as much in earnest as that Japanese boy. It is a pity we don't read our Bibles as thoroughly and eagerly.

Boys and girls, what about beginning to-day and reading a chapter or even a few verses every day? Do you know that is what King George does? When he was just a young middy, some forty years ago, he promised his mother, Queen Alexandra, that he would read a chapter of the Bible each day. And he has kept that promise faithfully. How do I know? Because some little time ago the secretary of a Bible Society was anxious to learn if this were really the case. He wrote to the King's secretary about it, and the King's

[1] Yoshio Markino, *When I was a Child*, 83.

secretary courteously replied: "It is quite true that the King promised Queen Alexandra, as long ago as 1881, that he would read a chapter of the Bible daily, and that he has ever since adhered to his promise." That is one of the finest stories I know about our King.

There is just one finer story I should like to tell you. It is about an old lady who loved her Bible so much that she knew it from cover to cover. Although she knew it almost all by heart, she still loved to look up and read her favourite texts. But, alas! as she grew older she became blind, and she could no longer see to read. But she was not daunted, not she! Her Bible was a large family one and she stuck a pin in each of her pet texts. Then when friends came to see her she would open her Bible and, feeling for a pin, would say, "Read that one." By and by she got so clever at knowing where the pins were that she could tell each verse by its pin. After her death the pins were counted. They numbered one hundred and sixty-eight. One hundred and sixty-eight favourite texts! How many have you?

THE ENCHANTMENT OF SIN.

Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.—John v. 40.

THERE is a book called *The Faerie Queen* which was written a few hundred years ago. It is full of wonderful stories, and one of these tells of the quest of the good knight, Sir Guyon.

The Faerie Queen, you must know, held a feast every year. It lasted for twelve days. All her brave knights were in attendance, and to the court at this time came also all those who had suffered injury and wanted help or assistance. The Faerie Queen listened to their tales of woe, and then she sent her knights to redress their wrongs.

At one of these feasts appeared an old palmer, or pilgrim monk. He was clad in black and carried a long staff in his hand. He had come to complain of the doings of a certain wicked witch named Acrasia who did many evil things in his country. The Queen turned to a brave handsome knight named Sir Guyon, and gave him the task of going with the palmer to save his country from the enchantress. So the two set out together.

They met with many strange adventures by the way; but at last they reached the land where Acrasia

lived. And now many savage beasts came rushing and roaring at them, but the palmer waved his staff and they slunk away. On they went till they reached a beautiful ivory palace. A young man at the gate offered them wine, but they would not drink it. Beyond the gate lay lovely gardens gay with flowers and fruits and the songs of many birds. Here a beautiful lady tried to persuade them to drink some grape juice which she squeezed into a cup for them, but Sir Guyon dashed the cup to the ground and pressed on.

He found the witch at last lying on a bed of roses. Creeping softly up he flung a net over her, and so took her prisoner. Then he destroyed her palace, and he and the palmer led her away captive.

They passed once more the savage beasts, but the palmer again touched them with his staff, and lo! at the touch they changed into men. They had all been men once, but they had been turned into beasts by the power of the wicked witch. For the wicked witch is just sin. Sin makes men like beasts when they listen to her and do her bidding.

Some of the men looked angry when they saw the witch a prisoner, and some were full of shame for their past conduct. But all were glad at being delivered—all except one.

His name was Grille, and he had been a pig so long that now he did not want to be anything else. All he asked was to be left to root and grunt for the rest of his days. He was so determined to remain a pig that

the palmer said it was hopeless to try to persuade him to the contrary, so he waved his staff once more and changed him back to a pig. The other men who had been restored went back joyfully to their own homes, but Grille was left behind—a pig for ever.

That was a nice choice to make, wasn't it! You may have heard of someone who was as greedy as a pig, or as lazy, or as dirty, or as obstinate. But nobody really likes to be compared to a pig. Much less would they choose to be one. There was a time when Grille did not like it either, when he thought his heart was broken because he knew he had become a pig. But that was so long ago that he had forgotten; and now he would not be anything else though he had the chance.

Boys and girls, you think Grille was very silly. So he was. But we—you and I—may be every bit as silly. We may get so fond of doing what is wrong that we may never want to do what is right. For that is what the story of poor Grille tells us. It would take more than a magician's wand to change back those who have got so fond of evil that they have lost all wish to be good.

Yes, it would take more than a magician's wand. But, thank God, there is One who is more powerful than any magician, One who can change people back from the sad shapes they have made for themselves. Christ can do that. But—and it is a very big but—He cannot do it against their will.

When He was on earth He grieved over the people of Jerusalem just for this reason. And to-day's text tell us what He said to them. He said, oh so sadly! "Ye *will not come* to me, that ye may have life."

Boys and girls, are you going to be like Grille and those foolish people of Jerusalem? Surely not. Are you not rather going to say to Him, "Dear Lord Jesus, here am I! Take me, and make of me what Thou wilt."

BELIEVE THE BEST.

Even his brethren did not believe on him.—John vii. 5.

Don't you like to think of Jesus growing up as a boy in His home at Nazareth and doing everyday things like any other child? We know that He worked as a carpenter with His father Joseph, and I am sure He helped His mother also in every way He could. He lived just as the other children in Nazareth lived, and did what they did, ate the same food, and played the same games. Those around Him did not know any great difference between Him and other children. They must have noticed that He was a good child, but to them He was only Joseph the carpenter's little son Jesus.

All the Jews looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. They believed that one day a Saviour would come to deliver the Jewish nation. They expected Him to come with pomp and power and defeat all their enemies; but they never dreamed that the Saviour was among them, and that He was Joseph's little son.

When He grew up and went out on His mission to save the world "even his brethren did not believe on him." How hard that must have been for Him!

When He gathered His disciples round Him and ordained twelve of them to be apostles, to be with Him and to preach and heal, there were none of His own brothers among them, nor were there any among the multitudes who followed Him. When they did come near Him it was to try to stop Him, because they said, "He is beside himself"—that is, "He is mad"—and they tried to get Him to come away home with them.

What must they have felt when Christ died and rose again and ascended into Heaven? "He was with us all these years, and we never knew Him, we would not believe on Him." *Then* they believed, but too late. How much easier His work would have been if His own friends had not been so distrustful of Him, and how much more He could have done for them if they had only believed!

James, the brother of our Lord, was afterwards the head of the Church in Jerusalem. There is a tradition that he prayed so much that his knees grew hard as those of a camel with kneeling on them. He believed so well then that he died a martyr; but he must always have felt, "Why did I not believe in Him sooner?"

Boys and girls, there is a wonderful power in belief. You know yourselves how much easier it is to do anything for those who believe in your power to do it. Their belief seems actually to give you the power.

It is the same with conduct. It is much easier to

be good with those who treat you as good than with those who are always looking for faults and expecting you to do wrong.

If you know a boy at school who has done a mean thing, and is in disgrace with everybody, don't take it for granted that he will always be like that. Give him a chance to redeem his character. You will likely find him very anxious to do so. Trust him and you may make him a man.

In a certain palace in Rome there lived some years ago a famous writer who had a servant to whom he entrusted the care and management of the whole household. This servant was what is known in Italy as a *major-domo*—that is to say, he was a sort of man cook-housekeeper. He got a certain sum every month on which to run the house, and he got his own salary besides. For a time all went smoothly. The man seemed devoted to his master. But one day the master happened to notice that the accounts, which were brought to him month by month for inspection, did not tally. Some money was not accounted for. It was merely missing. The master thought there must be a mistake and he gave the *major-domo* the benefit of the doubt; but month after month the same thing happened, and at last he was forced to believe that the man whom he had trusted was cheating him. What do you think he did?

He spread out the proofs of the man's guilt on his desk; and then rang the bell. When the man appeared he saw at once from the spread-out papers

and the master's serious face that his guilt had been discovered. For some minutes there was silence in the room. Then the master spoke, and this is what he said: "I am very grieved to find that for some months past you have been cheating me. I can only assume that the salary I have been paying you is not sufficient. From to-day it is doubled."

That was all. The servant could not speak—how could he? But he fell on his knees before that generous master, and sobbed till he was bidden to rise. He left that room not only a better man, but a good man for the rest of his life.

That good master's way was Christ's way. It was a better way than the way of Christ's brethren. Boys and girls, will you make it your way? If you do, you will be happy. And the world too will be a happier world because you have determined to believe in the best that is in your fellow-men.

LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE.

Judge not according to appearance.—John vii. 24.

LATE one evening a traveller came to an American inn. "I can't let you in here," said the innkeeper. "You are suffering from some disease and I don't want my family to catch it. Your face is very badly marked." "My face!" exclaimed the traveller. "I see how it is your mistake has arisen. I am a botanist, and I have been gathering rare plants all day long in the swamp yonder, and the mosquitoes have bitten me, and caused my skin to turn red and swollen."

The innkeeper begged pardon, and invited the great botanist, who presented his card, into the house.

Not very long ago, a handsome well-dressed lady with large brown eyes was walking along a street pavement in London. She walked arm-in-arm with a friend. A milkman on his rounds had left one of his pitchers on the pavement. The friend stepped aside, but the lady stumbled over the pitcher, with the result that it was upset and the milk was spilt. The milkman was very angry. The fact that the culprit was well-dressed seemed to make him all the angrier. "What do you mean kicking over my pitcher?" he shouted. "I'm sorry," she answered. "I did not mean it. I am blind."

"Blind," said he, looking at her eyes, "tell that to the first fool you meet; pay my milk." She did pay it.

The man could not have told that she was blind, for her eyes seemed as bright as yours are this morning; but don't you think it was a pity that he judged so hastily, and that he did not give even a moment's consideration to what the lady said?

The innkeeper and the milkman both made the same mistake. They judged by appearance, and appearance led them astray.

Appearance is just the outside of anything, or how things look to our eyes. With boys and girls at school, life itself is often pretty much a surface thing—"rare fun," as some of you would describe it. All the same, most of you feel that it is a good thing to get below the surface occasionally. Take a rather common case. A boy in your class—one who, you say, is "ripping good fun"—often walks home with you, and you feel rather proud of this. He asks you to go fishing with him one Saturday. You get a shock as he reveals himself to you. He says things you wish to forget, but cannot. Had your mother known everything she would have said, "Don't walk any more with that boy." And girls, there is one old lady who, when she looks back on her school life, remembers with thankfulness that she had as a friend a quaint, plainly-dressed girl whom all the "smart" pupils seemed to avoid. To that girl she now feels that she owes the greater part of her education.

Once a girl got a present of a box containing what

seemed a number of common stones. They had been gathered on the Rocky Mountains by a friend interested in geology. She would not believe that they were worth anything, so the little box and its contents were just pitched aside. Many years afterwards it appeared in a saleroom among other odds and ends. A specialist in geology noticed it, spent nearly a whole forenoon examining the stones, and gave a big price for it when it was put up to auction. The girl judged by appearances, and lost by doing so.

So it was when Jesus Christ was on earth. When He spoke His wonderful words there were people who said, "How has this man learning?" "Is not this the carpenter?" Others looked deeper, and found in Him a Friend far above any they had ever known. He could sympathize with them in everything, their joys and sorrows alike. More than that, they recognized in Him a Saviour from their sins.

You may think that you cannot know Jesus as His disciples knew Him. His bodily presence is certainly gone from this world; but your New Testament tells you about Him, and the oftener and more thoughtfully you read that wonderful book, the more living do its words become. Jesus Himself lives in its pages. But if in your reading of it you make no effort to get below the surface but just make up your mind that it is dull, you will miss having the comfort of His friendship when you are in difficulty. His disciples saw in their Friend the Christ, the Son of the Living God. What a friend to have!

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

I am the light of the world.—John viii. 12.

I AM going to ask you a question. Which do you like best—light or darkness? I expect most of you will answer "light." And do you know that, if the flowers could speak, and you asked them that question, they would give the same answer. They would say, "Yes, little comrades, we like the light too. We always turn towards it, and we could not live without it."

Now, once upon a time, the world was in darkness. I don't mean to say that the sun was not shining—it was blazing down just as brightly as it does to-day—but the people who lived in it were in darkness; their lives were dark, and their souls were dark, because they did not know God or understand Him. Sometimes God sent His prophets to tell them about Himself, but these prophets were just like stars in the night sky—they only showed up the darkness and gave little gleams of light; for still the people did not understand. Then one day God sent His Son into the world, and when He came the darkness vanished away. He was like the rising sun, driving away the night. And He has gone on shining ever since. Never again will there be darkness, for He is the Light of the World.

You know that when the light comes it shows up many things which we could not see in the dark, and so when Jesus came He made plain many things which before were dark. Now I want you to think about some of the things which Jesus shows us.

And first of all *He shows us God.*—Once, long, long ago, man walked with God in the Garden of Eden, but then sin came; and after that man looked on God as a great and terrible Being shrouded in clouds and thick darkness. But it was sin that hid God from him, that kept him from seeing God aright. Then Jesus, the Son of God, came down to earth. He loved men, He pitied them, He healed them, He forgave them, He drew them to Him. He showed them what God was —full of love and pity and forgiveness. He told them that He and His Father were one, that he that had seen Him had seen the Father, because they were one in nature and purpose and desire.

In the second place *Jesus shows us sin.*—Before He came to earth there were some men—men like King David—who saw that sin was a very dark thing. But it was not till Jesus came that men really saw how terribly black it was. He showed this to them in two ways. He showed it by living a white, sinless life; and He showed it by His death. It required the sacrifice of the perfect Son of God to wash away sin's stain.

Then again, *Jesus shows us the path of life.*—There are many pitfalls in our path, many stumbling-blocks.

There are thorn hedges which tear and wound us, and there are side roads which lead us astray. If we had to walk in the dark we should be sure to come to grief. But Jesus is willing to light up the way so that we can get safely past all these dangers. If we ask Him, He will shine on our path to guide us.

Lastly, *Jesus shows us our duty to each other.*—Before Jesus came most people thought that might was right, and that the weak should go to the wall. But Jesus showed us a better way. He taught us to love one another, to pity the weak, and help the helpless, and forgive the erring.

Now I wonder if you have noticed one special thing about the sun—it shines for everybody. It shines for the king in his palace; it shines for the poor man in his cottage. It shines for big people and little people, for sick people and well people, for good people and bad people. A candle lights up a few yards, a street lamp lights up a few dozen yards, and a lighthouse a few miles. But the sun shines for everybody, and even when his face is hidden by clouds we still know he is shining by the daylight around us.

And the Light of the World is just like that. He shines for everybody—for everybody who will let Him in. He means that we should all be enlightened; but some people prefer to sit in the dark. And why do they prefer the dark? Jesus tells us the reason. He says, "Light is come into the world, and men loved

darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Do you remember how Adam and Eve hid themselves from God when they knew they had done wrong? They were afraid to face Him.

And now I am going to ask you again the question with which I began. Which do you like best—light or darkness? There is one way that you can shut out the light of the sun—by putting shutters on your windows; and there is one way that you can shut out the Light of the World—by putting shutters on the windows of your soul. What would you think if you came across someone who liked to live in total darkness in a shuttered house? Would you not think them very queer and stupid? And don't you think the people who put shutters on the windows of their soul are even queerer and more stupid? Are your shutters up, or are they folded away?

Once upon a time a beautiful palace of ice was built for a Russian prince. In the daytime it looked very grand and stately, but it was so cold and cheerless that no one cared to enter it. When night came on, a boy with a lighted candle went through the door, and immediately the whole place was filled with warmth and gladness. The palace seemed to have caught the sheen of the pearly gates of Heaven.

And, boys and girls, that is what our lives may be if we let the Light of the World shine in upon them. They may become radiant, and beautiful, and warm, and glad.

A WONDERFUL DOOR.

I am the door of the sheep.—John x. 7.

I WANT to speak to you to-day about doors. Perhaps you will think that is a queer subject for a sermon. Doors are such commonplace things; everybody has a door even if they live in one room. Yes, doors are very commonplace things, and yet they are very important; for, you see, it matters very much on which side of the door you are. If you were in prison, the best side of the door would be the outside; and if you were shut out of your home at night, the best side of the door would be the inside. Sometimes it is good to be on the outside of a door, and sometimes it is good to be on the inside.

Now a door can be two things—two exactly opposite things. It can be either a way of entrance or a barrier. A door is a thing that lets us in, but it is also a thing that keeps us out. I wonder if any of you have been locked out of a room by your friends. Perhaps they were planning something they didn't wish you to know about. If you have, you will remember how "out in the cold" you felt.

I don't suppose any of you have had the experience that David Livingstone, the great missionary explorer,

had when he was a small boy. His father was a very strict man, and one of his rules was that the cottage door should be locked every evening at dusk. One evening David stayed out playing rather longer than usual. When he reached home he found the door shut and barred. He stood looking at that door for a few minutes; but he did not attempt to knock at it or to kick it, as some boys might have done, for he knew that his father's rules were unalterable. A neighbour took pity on him and gave him a bit of bread for supper, and then he curled himself up on the doorstep and prepared to spend the night there. Fortunately his mother grew anxious about him, and, late in the evening, she opened the door to go out to look for him; so the boy was brought in after all. I should think David Livingstone realized that night the disadvantage of being outside a door.

But the door of a home is not meant to keep the children outside, it is meant to keep out only those who would harm the home—thieves and robbers, and those who have no business there. It is meant to keep the children safe and secure inside, and if the children are not within, it is their own fault, and their own loss.

Now the Bible has a good deal to say about doors, and about the opening and shutting of them. You remember the story about the five foolish virgins who took no oil in their lamps. While they were away buying it, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were

ready went in with him to the wedding feast. And when the five foolish ones returned they found the door shut.

Then St. Paul speaks more than once about doors being opened to him. By this he means opportunities for preaching and for winning disciples for Christ.

Again, there is that beautiful verse in the last book of the Bible—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It is a picture of Jesus standing patiently outside the fast-closed door of our heart, waiting to get in.

But the best text of all is the one in which Jesus tells us that He Himself is the Door—"the door of the sheep." Now what did Jesus mean by saying that He was "the door of the sheep"? And who are the sheep? To understand that you must know a little about the life of sheep in the land where Jesus lived.

In the daytime the sheep are taken out to feed on the hillside pastures, but at night the shephord brings his flock down to the fold. The fold is an enclosure surrounded by a high wall, and entered by a door or gate. After all the sheep are in, an under-shepherd fastens the door on the inside, and stays with the sheep to guard them. The door keeps the sheep safe; they enter by it, and when they are inside the closed door keeps them secure from wild beasts and robbers.

Now all the boys and girls and men and women in the world are like sheep. God wished all the sheep to be safe within the fold, but they shut themselves out of the fold by their sins. So a way in had to be found,

and that way was Christ. Christ came to be a Door for us back into God's fold.

I was reading the other day about a brave Indian Sikh who, during the time of the Indian Mutiny, fought on the side of the British. The British troops were trying to capture a certain city from the mutineers. It was surrounded by a great wall, and in the wall was a very strong iron gate which our cannon had failed to shatter.

One day a waggon with food for the enemy was seen dashing towards the gate. The British army made a rush for the gate, for they hoped to get in before it closed again. One splendid Sikh was ahead of the others, and he reached the entrance just as the two halves of the gate were rolling together. Very swiftly he thrust his arm between them. It was crushed in an instant, but the mutineers could not quite close the gates so long as the arm was there, so they began hacking it off on the other side. When it was almost gone the Sikh thrust in his other arm, and just before it was hacked off the main body of our army arrived. The men flung themselves upon the gate, it yielded, and the city was conquered.

That splendid Sikh gave his arms to make an entrance for the British army into one Indian city; Jesus gave Himself to make an entrance for us into God's safe fold.

But Jesus is not only a way of entrance, He is also a protection to the sheep in the fold. A traveller in

Palestine was once talking to a shepherd about the sheepfold. The shepherd was explaining everything to him, but there was one thing which puzzled the traveller—there was no door to the sheepfold. When he asked the shepherd where the door was, the man replied, "I am the door." When night came on he wrapped himself in a blanket and lay down across the entrance. No sheep could get out, and no wild beast could get in—except across his body.

And Jesus is our Door. He is our defence, and if we trust in Him and keep near Him, the enemies of sin and temptation can do us no harm. He will not let them hurt us.

Perhaps you ask, "How can I get in at the Door?" Well, you can get in just by coming to the Door. Jesus does not wish anyone to stay outside the fold. He has shelter and food enough to spare for all within. But some poor silly sheep prefer to stay outside on the bare mountain, and to risk being devoured by wild beasts. You can get in at the Door if you want to get in. You can get in by opening *your* door—the door of your heart, and letting Christ into it.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I am the good shepherd.—John x. 11.

A SHEPHERD in Palestine is a much more common sight than is a shepherd in this country. There a great many people are employed in keeping sheep. That is why we so often find sheep and shepherds mentioned in the Bible. Customs change very slowly in the East, and the shepherds to-day are so like what they were in Bible times that we get a very good idea of a shepherd's life when we read of Joseph going to see his brethren while they were keeping the sheep, or of David being called away from his sheep to be anointed king of Israel, or of shepherds watching their flocks by night at Bethlehem.

While they are very little, boys, and sometimes girls, begin to take care of the sheep. And they make friends with each sheep, and know the little differences between them (for sheep are not so much alike as one would think). Each sheep has its own name, such as "Brown Ear" or "Lame Leg," and the sheep know their names.

At first the little shepherds are not allowed to go very far from home. When they grow older they are trusted to care for the sheep entirely and to take them

away long distances to find pasture. The pasture is very scarce, especially in the dry season when the grass is dried up with the fierce heat, and the sheep must be taken from place to place wherever pasture may be found. In spring they feed in the plains, but in the heat of summer they are taken up to the mountains.

In appearance the Eastern shepherd is a curious figure. He wears a large cloak made of sheep-skin, or woven of wool or hair. This coat protects him from the cold at night. In the breast of it is a deep pocket, so big that he can carry in it any poor little lamb that has got hurt, or is too young to keep up with the others. At his side hangs a bag of skin, called a scrip, in which he carries some bread and cheese, also olives or figs and a drinking pitcher. Hanging to his belt is his "rod," a stout club for defending himself against wild beasts or other enemies. In his hand is a long staff which he uses for walking, and for knocking down leaves for his sheep. Like David, he has a sling with which he can throw stones at an enemy or frighten a lazy sheep.

The shepherd does not drive his sheep before him: he goes in front and calls to them, and they follow him. They know his voice, and if anyone else tries to produce the same cries, they look round startled and begin to scatter.

As there are no walls round the fields of barley or wheat, the shepherd must take care that his sheep do not stray into them, and when they are feeding away from all cultivated lands he must be just as careful,

lest they wander and get lost or stolen. If he sees one wandering, and it does not come when he calls, he puts a stone into his sling and throws it so that it will fall just beyond the sheep and frighten it back.

The same shepherd often has separate flocks, one of sheep and one of goats, and he must lead them where he can find food for both, for they do not like the same food. The sheep prefer the fresh grass of the plains, the goats the leaves and twigs of trees which are to be found on the rocky cliffs. The shepherd must find places where food is to be had and lead his flocks there, and sometimes he must cut down the branches of trees to feed them.

Goats do not mind the heat, but sheep do, and so in the heat of the day a shady place must be found for them to shelter in. Sometimes in the hot season they lie in the fold all day, and feed only during the night. Then they must have water, and the shepherd knows where there is a stream, or a well with troughs round it. He must draw water from the well with a bucket and fill the troughs for his thirsty sheep. A great many shepherds may come with their flocks to the same well, but the sheep never get mixed, because each sheep knows its own master's voice, and will follow no other.

There are many dangers in a shepherd's life. In this country the sheep may lie out on the hills in perfect safety, but in Palestine there are wild animals, against which they must be protected. There are wolves, and jackals, and hyænas prowling about at night, and in

some parts leopards are seen now and then. In the holes of the rocks where the sheep feed there are poisonous snakes. All these may attack the shepherd as well as the sheep. Or a great bird of prey, such as a vulture, may swoop down, and carry away a little lamb or a kid.

There are other dangers too. There are wandering Bedouin robbers, who will steal any animal they can find unless the shepherd is brave enough to defend it. The shepherd has often to fight for his sheep, and may have to give his very life for them. It is then that the good shepherd shows his love for his sheep. A hired shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, will run away from the wolf or the robber and leave the sheep to their fate.

To keep the sheep safely at night the shepherd puts them into a fold. It is an enclosure made by building a rough high wall and laying a quantity of furze or other thorns on the top. The flocks of several shepherds may all be put into one fold. The door is guarded by one man, and the others lie down to sleep near. Yet sometimes wild animals may spring into the fold; or a robber may come and climb the wall. Only a robber would do that, for if he were a shepherd the porter would open the door for him. The sheep are counted when they are put in, and when they are taken out. When the day dawns the shepherds wake up, and come for their sheep. The porter opens the door, and each shepherd "putteth forth his own sheep."

"I am the good shepherd," said Christ. Yes, He is the Shepherd, and we are His sheep. It is He who goes before us, leading us home to a safe fold in Heaven. He loves us, as the shepherd loves his lambs when he carries them in his bosom. He calls to us when we wander away from Him, and brings us back in case we should get lost. He defends us from our enemies, and, like a true shepherd, He gave His very life for us.

When Jesus had gone up to Heaven, His people loved to remember that He had called Himself their Shepherd. In the earliest Christian pictures, this was how they liked best to show Him. Very soon after His death Christians were persecuted for His sake. In Rome they had to meet in secret in underground burying-places called Catacombs. They cut pictures showing their faith on the rock walls, and on the tombs, and the favourite one was the Good Shepherd. Sometimes He was sitting among His sheep, but often He was carrying a sheep on His shoulders; for they remembered, when they buried their friends, that the Good Shepherd could carry their souls to Heaven, as the earthly shepherd carries home a weary sheep.

HOW THE CHILDREN HELPED JESUS.

Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.—John xii. 13 (AV).

IMAGINE a lovely April morning on the slopes of Mount Olivet just outside the walls of Jerusalem. The slopes are covered with the tents of pilgrims who have come up to the Feast of the Passover. Suddenly someone looking up the hill towards the Bethany road cries, "Here He is!" and the whole hillside is immediately in a buzz of excitement.

Yes! it is Jesus Christ. He is riding on an ass and He has with Him quite a troop of followers. Those folks on the hillside are mostly from Galilee, where Jesus wrought so many of His miracles, and many of the children are Galilean boys and girls. Some of them had been at the wonderful picnic in the wilderness of Bethsaida when Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes. It was from one of themselves that Jesus got the five loaves. And had not their fathers and mothers told them of the little girl who was raised from the dead? Jesus was a special Friend of theirs. Soon the tents were stripped of their decorations. The boys and girls gathered branches from all the trees within reach.

With their fathers and mothers they ran to meet Jesus, waving the branches all the way; then they turned and followed Him. Young and old were together in the crowd that surrounded the wonderful Teacher. Palm branches were spread upon the ground for Him to ride upon. It was like a royal procession.

"Who is this?" asked the people of the city. The procession caused quite a stir on the streets. The pilgrims from the north were full of enthusiasm. "Bravos," and "hurrahs," rose from their lips, and sweet children's voices blended in the "Hosannas." To the city the whole thing meant nothing. "The Galilean peasant prophet, forsooth!" said they. "And He is going to the Temple. What desecration!" But they could hear the shrill voices of the children joining in the hymn used at the Feast of Tabernacles. "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Temple masters were angry—they could not restrain themselves; but the boy and girls cared not. They had eyes only for their Friend. "Hearest thou what these say?" said the scribes and Pharisees impatiently. Jesus was calm. He loved to hear the children. "It is such praise that God loves best," was His answer; and it meant a great deal.

Perhaps some of you wish you had been in that procession. You wish you could have shouted, and sung, and flung your branches on the road to make a fair triumphal path for Jesus. Perhaps some of you

think you would have preferred to scatter rose leaves in Jesus' way. You feel that only the best and the sweetest would be good enough for Him.

Well, boys and girls, you can still cast your palm branches or rose leaves at Christ's feet. You can still make beautiful His way. We are sometimes apt to think of Christ as being far up in some vague region beyond the skies which we call Heaven. That is a great mistake. Christ *is* in Heaven, but Heaven is much nearer us than we imagine, and He is also on earth. He comes to us in every opportunity to help our fellow-men. And if we are doing anything to make their road in life easier or more beautiful we are casting our palm branches and our rose leaves in Christ's path; we are making His way smoother, we are workers along with Him, making the world better and sweeter.

Shall I tell you a story I read the other day? It is an old tale, and it comes to us all the way from Hungary. There was once a good Queen of Hungary named Elizabeth. She was always thinking how she could help her subjects, and she was specially kind to those who were sick or in want. She was so interested in them that she often carried them food with her own hands. Now her husband was not pleased about this. He thought that it was beneath a Queen's dignity to do such humble service, and he forbade her to do it any more, saying that he would punish her if he found her doing it again.

One winter morning when the King was out hunting

Elizabeth heard of some people who were hungry and in great distress. She filled her basket with bread and slipped out of the palace gate. And at the gate whom did she run into but the King himself, who had unexpectedly returned from the chase? He saw the basket and sternly bade her show him what it contained. Trembling, she removed the covering, and lo! the basket was filled with the most exquisite roses.

That is a story with many meanings, but what I want you to remember about it is this. Our little bit of help to others may in our eyes be but a small crumb to offer to the great Master. In His sight it is a fragrant rose of love.

SEEING JESUS.

Sir, we would see Jesus.—John xii. 21.

HAVE you ever stood in the streets of a great city and watched the crowds surging past? Have you ever wondered where these people came from, what their homes were like, what was the story of their lives, and what their future would be? For a moment they are beside you, you hear a scrap of their conversation, or they look with you into the same shop window, and then they vanish from your sight, and very likely you never meet them again.

Now there are people in the Bible who are like our friends and relatives. We know quite a lot about them, we have a pretty long account of their life history. But there are others—and some of them are very interesting people—who are like the crowds in a big city. For one moment we get a glimpse of them, and then they pass out of our sight for ever.

Among those people are the Greeks who came to the apostle Philip and asked him to introduce them to Jesus. All that we know about them is told us in three verses; but they are very interesting verses, and they set us wondering about a lot of things which they do not tell us.

And first we wonder, Who were these Greeks, and from where did they come?

Some people think that they may have come from Bethsaida on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, because they spoke to Philip who belonged to Bethsaida.

There is one thing that we certainly know about them, and that is that they believed in the God of Israel. They had given up their heathen gods and adopted the God of Israel as their God. How do we know this? Well, if you look at verse 20 you will find out. It tells us that these men had come up to worship at the Feast. The Feast mentioned is the great Feast of the Passover which the Jews kept once a year in memory of the time when the first-born of Egypt were slain and the destroying angel passed over the houses of the first-born of Israel. And if the Greeks had come up to worship at that Feast, then they must have believed in the God of Israel.

Then another question we ask is, Why did these Greeks want to see Jesus?

Well, a great many people wanted to see Jesus in those days. Some wished to see Him because they were sick, or had sick friends, and they wanted Jesus to heal them. And many others came to see Him out of curiosity, because they had heard of His miracles. But I don't think the Greeks came for either of those reasons. They were not ill, so they had not come for healing; and if they had wanted merely to behold

this Man of whom every one was talking, they could have done so by waiting by the roadside where He was to pass, or by climbing a tree like Zacchæus. But they acted differently. They came to one of the disciples and asked him to let them see Jesus. They wanted to speak with Him. I wonder why?

I think it was because they were not quite satisfied. They had learned to know and worship the true God, but they felt there was something more to know about Him. There was still a great hunger in their hearts. They had heard of the great things Jesus had said and done, and they came to Him hoping He would be able to teach them and give them rest for their souls.

And then another question we ask is, How did Jesus receive these men? What did He say to them?

Well, we are not told. All the Bible says is that Philip went and told Andrew about their request, and that then the two disciples came and told Jesus. But of one thing we may be sure—sooner or later these Greeks found Jesus, for nobody ever sought Him earnestly in vain. Perhaps it was not until after He had ascended that they found Him, perhaps they were among the early converts of Peter or Paul; but we may be quite sure of one thing—they found Him in the end of the day.

Now I wonder if you have ever felt that you would like to see Jesus. If it were announced that Jesus

was coming to this town you would put off any engagement to go and see Him, would you not? Perhaps you have felt that if you could hear His voice and look up into His kind face it would be easier to be good.

But we can still see Jesus—every one of us—if we will. If He had stayed on earth only a few people could have seen Him. Many could not have travelled so far, most people could not have afforded do so. But now that He has ascended into Heaven we can all see Him—if we will.

How can we see Him?

We can see Him in the Bible. Someone has said that God has given us five portraits of Jesus in the Bible—one in each of the Gospels and another in the Epistles. But it is not only in the Gospels and the Epistles that we find Him; for long before He came prophets and psalmists spoke of Him, and if you search carefully you will find a very great deal about Him in the Old Testament.

Then we can see Him in the lives of those who are following Him most closely and loving Him best. You have all met men and women whose lives were so beautiful and unselfish and true that they reflected some of the beauty and the love of the King of Love Himself.

Once a lady who worked in the slums of one of our great cities was walking along a street when she met a little ragged boy who smiled up in her face. "Do you know me?" she asked. "Yes," said the boy.

"Then who am I?" Very softly and reverently he whispered, "You are Jesus."

But best of all, we can see Jesus in the visions of Himself which He gives to all who love Him and try to serve Him.

Will you ask God to give you His Holy Spirit so that your hearts may be filled with love to Jesus, and your eyes may be opened to see Him?

MAGNETS.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.—John xii. 32.

MOST of you have seen a magnet. I remember that when I was at school a good many of the boys had small steel magnets with which they went about picking up needles, pen-points, and a great many things of a like kind. I envied most of all a companion who possessed what I thought was a wonderful box. It contained toy ducks and a little fishing-rod. At the end of the fishing-rod was a tiny magnet. You know the toy. The ducks are put into a basin or tub of water, you hang the fishing-line near them, and they follow in whatever direction you care to lead them.

The story of how a magnet is made is very interesting. At one time it was just ordinary steel; but one day a coil of wire was twisted round it, an electric current was passed through the coil, the steel then became a magnet, and even when the current was stopped remained a magnet. The steel magnet can pass on its magnetism to other pieces of steel. If you stroke a needle with a steel magnet, the needle also becomes a magnet.

Magnetism is not something that we add to the steel. If that is so, why is every little piece of steel not a magnet? One writer has said that the simplest way to think of the subject is to picture every particle of which the steel is made as itself a tiny magnet. In a piece of ordinary steel there are millions of these tiny magnets, but they are all lying higgledy-piggledy, some pulling one way, and some another. They are, in fact, all at sixes and sevens, and the result is that they do no good. Ordinary steel attracts nothing. But if an electric current is sent through a coil of wire placed round the steel, all these little magnets within the steel are pulled into line with one another, and their combined efforts produce quite a strong attraction for any other piece of steel or iron.

Magnetism is a wonder and a mystery, but a greater mystery is how one person attracts another.

Are there not certain of your companions who attract you in a very special manner, and you cannot tell how it is? You cannot keep away from them. You cannot explain it to yourself, but there it is. Something in them corresponds to something in you; they are magnets. It is very strange and wonderful.

Here is another strange thing. We want to be good; we see the beauty of the character of a companion who is always downright and kind at heart, and who never suggests bad thoughts to those about him. But evil also has its attractions. If the good pulls us in one direction, evil is never far off.

It is in the playground, at home, and in our own hearts. The conflict between good and evil is life's most tremendous problem. It is a case of the good drawing us from above and the evil holding us down. When boys and girls come thoroughly under the spell of good companions or friends they are kept from evil; but friends pass away, and with them passes away the magnetism that was about their living presence.

There is One, however, who lived nearly 2000 years ago. When He was on earth, He attracted just a few working men about Him. But as time went on His influence, instead of diminishing, increased. The story of how during these long years men and women, and boys and girls, have been drawn to Jesus Christ is one which has no parallel in history. You cannot find another story like it.

Boys and girls, we have all some good in us—something that wants God. But we have evil in us too; and you know how we need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The only thing that can help us is coming into contact with Him who can draw all men unto Him. All sorts of interests attract us: some are good, some evil. When Jesus Christ touches us, our longings and desires will be pulled into line with one another. We in turn shall become magnets—magnets for good.

OUR GREAT EXAMPLE.

I have given you an example.—John xiii. 15.

Our text to-day is one of Christ's sayings. He said it to His disciples the last evening He was on earth, just before they all had their last meal together.

You remember that Last Supper. It was held in a large upper room lent by Christ's friends. In the room was a table on which the supper was set. There were also a number of couches for the guests. At an Eastern feast, you see, they did not sit on chairs as we do, they reclined on couches. But besides these pieces of furniture there were a pitcher of water, a basin, and a towel. These were specially important, for before a meal what seems to us a curious performance was gone through. All the guests had their feet bathed. This was absolutely necessary for their comfort, because the people wore no shoes in the house and only sandals out-of-doors, and the sandy roads of Palestine were both hot and dusty. So the custom was that when the guests arrived a slave poured cool water over their tired feet and wiped them with a towel. Christ and His disciples were poor and had no slave to perform this office for them, but one of the disciples was supposed to do it instead.

On this last evening of Christ's life, however, the disciples had been quarrelling as to which of them was the greatest and they had got so hot over it that they hustled into the room like a lot of great sulking schoolboys. They threw themselves down on their couches and looked at the table, looked at the ceiling, looked at the floor, looked anywhere but at the pitcher and basin and towel that were crying out to be used. They knew quite well that it was the duty of one to bathe the feet of the others, but they were all equally determined not to be that one. They thought that he who would condescend to do such a lowly service would at once be acknowledging himself inferior, so they just sat down and gloomed and said nothing.

Neither did Christ say anything; but He did something. He did a most surprising thing. He took a look at their faces and He took a look at their hearts —for He saw all that was going on there—and then He rose and, casting aside His robes, took the pitcher and the basin and the towel, and, one after another, He washed the feet of those sullen, angry men. Can't you guess how they must have felt when their Lord and Master—the Lord and Master of heaven and earth—stooped to do for them a slave's duty? In one moment the angry passion must have left each heart, and burning shame must have filled it.

We know that Peter, who was always the spokesman, did protest, and that he drew up his feet on the couch, and refused to let Christ serve him. But Christ insisted that Peter also should have his feet bathed.

He bathed the feet of all, even those of Judas, who that very night was to betray Him for the price of a slave.

Then Christ put on His robes again and sat down, and looking on their shamed faces said gently, "Do you know why I, your Lord and Master, have done this? It is because I want you to do likewise. I have given you an example, and I want you to think of it and copy it when I am gone. I want you to learn that true greatness consists in serving others, and that the greatest among you is the one who is readiest to serve his brethren!"

Now, when Christ said He had given us an example to copy, He did not mean that we were actually to take a pitcher and a basin and a towel and go round washing the feet of others. Emperors and Popes and Archbishops have done that and are still doing it every year on Holy Thursday—or Maundy Thursday as we call it—the day before Good Friday. I am sure you will all have heard of Maundy money or Maundy pennies, the little silver pieces that our own King gives to deserving poor people on that day. He gives them money now instead of washing their feet, for the last English sovereign to carry out the ceremony of feet washing was James II.

To wash the feet of beggars or poor people—that is one way of copying Christ's example. It is copying it in the letter. But that is not the way Christ meant us to copy it when He said, "I have given you an

example." He meant us to imitate the spirit in which the deed was done. He meant us to learn that he who is really greatest is he who is readiest to cast aside his pride and serve his fellowmen.

Boys and girls, you are good at imitating. Why not imitate the Highest? Why not copy Christ? The world still thinks it difficult to copy Christ's example; but those who know Christ know that it is easy for two reasons.

The first is that Christ showed the way. Christ gave the pattern. You know how much easier it is to do a sum if the teacher has worked one like it on the blackboard. If you have only written directions it seems almost impossible, but with the example before your eyes it is quite another matter.

The second reason is that love helps us. If we love Christ and if we love our fellow-men we feel that we can never do enough to serve them. Love makes service joy.

It is told of the famous French artist, Gustave Doré, that, whilst he was painting the face of Christ in one of his pictures, a lady came into his studio. Her gaze fell on the face and she stood transfixed, so wonderful was it. The artist watched her anxiously meanwhile. "Why do you look at me like that, M. Doré?" she asked. "I wanted to see what you thought of that face," was the reply. "You do like it—don't you?" "Yes, I do," said the lady. "And I'll tell you what I think. I think that you couldn't paint such a face of

Christ unless you loved Him." "Unless I loved Him!" exclaimed Doré. "Ah! Madame, I trust I do, and that most sincerely—but as I love Him more I shall paint Him better."

That artist knew the secret of service. He knew that the more we love the better we serve.

LOVING AND GIVING.

Love one another.—John xiii. 34.

When Jesus knew that His earthly life was nearly ended and that the time had come when He should be parted from His disciples, He left them this message—"Love one another."

Now people always like to fulfil the last wishes of their friends. They look upon it as a sacred duty. You remember King Robert the Bruce's last wish—that his heart should be buried in the Holy Land—and how brave James Douglas died in trying to fulfil it. Jesus has left His great Heart of Love in our keeping, but He does not wish us to bury it in the Holy Land: He wishes us to carry it all over the world so that the whole earth may become a Holy Land.

How can we do this? By loving one another.

But what does "loving one another" mean? You may think it is very easy to answer that, but it is not so easy as it looks, because love is such a big word and it means a great many things. I was trying to think of some way of making this plain to you, and while I was thinking, an old rhyme came into my head. It is a rhyme about the days of the week on which children are born. I expect most of you know it. It begins—

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace.

And when it gets to "Friday's child," it says—

Friday's child is loving and giving.

When I reached that line I said, "Now that's just it. 'Loving and giving' always go together, for 'loving' is just 'giving' in some form or other."

1. And, first, loving means giving *in*.

Once two children were sitting together on a stool which was just a little too small to hold them both comfortably. At last one said to the other, "Don't you think if one of us got down, there would be more room for *me*?"

Often in our homes or at school it happens like that. Two people want the same thing—a thing that can't be shared comfortably; and when that is the case, there is usually a quarrel—*unless* one of the two gives in. Now loving just means giving in. It means thinking of others and realizing that they have a right to things too. It means saying, "Don't you think if one of us got down, there would be more room for *you*?"

2. And then loving means giving *up*.

There was once a little boy who owned a canary. He loved it very much and he fed it and cared for it every day. But one day his mother fell ill. She was very, very ill indeed, and the singing of the bird hurt

her and made her feel worse. The boy carried the cage to a distant part of the house, but still the shrill notes reached her room. One day the child was beside his mother when the canary began to sing. A look of pain crossed her face and when the boy saw it he left the room and ran downstairs. Without saying a word to anyone he took the bird, cage and all, and gave it away to a friend. When his mother heard what he had done, she was very much touched, and she said, "But you loved the bird." "Yes," said the child, "but I love you more."

So loving sometimes means giving *up*.

3. Loving also means giving *away*.

On the day that Queen Victoria died, the news of her death was telegraphed all over the world, and wherever the tidings went people were very sorry, for she had been a good and kind and wise ruler.

Now among other places, the news came to Dublin. And on the bills of the evening newspapers there was printed in large letters—"DEATH OF THE QUEEN." One newspaper boy was busy laying out his bills on the pavement when a little ragged bare-footed urchin came running past. He stopped to read the news and when he saw it two big tears rose in his eyes and trickled down his grimy cheeks. Suddenly an idea came to him. He fumbled in the depths of his pocket and brought out a penny—the only penny he possessed in all the world! Then he darted across the street to where a flower-girl was standing and purchased a bunch

of violets. Back he came, handling the flowers so tenderly. He unfastened the string and laid the violets one by one all over the word "QUEEN." Then he stood looking down on them with tears in his eyes.

A gentleman who was passing had noticed the incident and he stopped to ask the boy what had made him do as he had done. The little fellow replied, "I didn't seem as if I could help it. I loved her so, for she was always so kind. My two brothers are soldiers out at the war in South Africa, and she was always so good to her soldiers."

Yes, boys and girls, loving means giving *away*.

4. Again, loving means giving *yourself*.

About three hundred years ago there lived in Portugal a monk called Fra Bernardo. He was supposed to be holy and happy, but he was neither. For in his heart was neither faith, nor love, nor any vision of God.

Now it came to pass that the plague visited the city in which this monk lived, and many people fled the place; but not so Fra Bernardo. He went in and out among the stricken people, he fed them, he comforted them, he nursed them with his own hands. And, little by little, as he shared the sorrows of others, his cold empty heart was filled with a great pity. But still he had no vision of God.

Then one day he visited the home of a poor woman who was dying of the pestilence. She was in great distress and she said, "I am not afraid to die, dear

Father, but who is to look after my boy and girl?" And there and then Fra Bernardo promised to care for the children and bring them up.

So he took the boy and girl home with him. He cared for them and amused them. He fed them, and clothed them, and took them for walks. He was to them father and mother and big brother all rolled into one. He loved them and gave himself to them. And then, one day, the great thought came to him—if these children mean so much to me, perhaps I mean something to God. The vision of God had come, and his heart was filled with love and joy and peace. For the great secret of loving is serving—giving yourself to and for others.

5. That's four things to remember. Loving means giving *in*, giving *up*, giving *away*, giving *yourself*. Can you remember one more? Loving means *for*giving.

The other day I read the story of two cannibal chiefs who were neighbours and who both became Christians. One was called Panapa and the other Tamati. In the old, bad days, before he became a Christian, Panapa had killed and eaten Tamati's father, and he was very much afraid to meet Tamati, because he thought Tamati would want to kill *him*.

Now it so happened that a Communion service was being held in a neighbouring village, and the two chiefs, each unknown to the other, resolved to be present. When Tamati went forward to the altar rail to receive the bread and wine—as they do in the

Church of England—who should be kneeling beside him but Panapa. Tamati's face became convulsed with rage. He lifted his fist as though he were going to strike Panapa. Then all of a sudden his hand fell to his side and he rose up and left the church. In a few minutes he returned, tears streaming down his cheeks. He knelt down in his old place at the altar rail and drank out of the same cup as the murderer of his father.

When the service was over, the missionary asked Tamati how he had received grace to act as he had. And the chief replied, "I remembered how it is written in God's book, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'"

Boys and girls, if we want to be the disciples of the loving, gentle Jesus we must be forgiving. Loving means *for*giving.

THE SECRET OF OBEDIENCE.

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.—John xiv. 15.

A SMALL boy of my acquaintance has a wonderful toy. It is a motor wagon which runs upon a circle of rails. On the driver's box sits a little man who, when the toy is wound up, raises his right hand to his cap. Then my young friend lays a tiny parcel beside him and says, "Take that to Mr. So-and-so." A companion stands at the other side of the circle. The motor stops beside him; he lifts the parcel off. The little driver again raises his hand and is soon back to the point at which he started. Again he salutes; again he is sent on an errand; again he shows the same obedience.

The obedience of the little man is only an example of clockwork. When the toy is wound up, he obeys orders because he cannot do otherwise. He does not think: he has no feelings: his little master is nothing to him. His is the obedience of mechanism—the poorest obedience of all.

Now, I feel sure that some of you have at one time or other asked yourselves, "Why does not God make us always want to do the right thing? Here we are put into the world, and left to do as we like. Just

think for a moment. The little man on the motor does the same thing over and over again, simply because he is wound up; he cannot but do it. Wouldn't you get tired of having that little motorman constantly beside you? Wouldn't you want rather to have some living creature that you could train to do things? Some of you have a dog of your very own. You have taken a great deal of pains to train him to obedience. You punish him if he does anything wrong; yet he loves you all the time. Isn't he really much better than the motorman?

I have met boys and girls—not many, however—who seemed just like the mechanical toy. They always behaved well; but it was as if they had never wanted to do wrong. They had been trained to do the right thing without thinking.

There is a kind of boy, and a kind of girl, that I like better. Once a little fellow went to Jesus when he was called. Somebody wrote that little story down. The boy never dreamed that he would be mentioned in the greatest book in the world, and that thousands on thousands of people would read about his obedience and be better for doing it.

Jesus may call you by using your mother's voice. He may say, "Tom, I want you to go an errand." I read the other day of a boy who had been hoeing weeds all day. His mother called him to go an errand. Now, the little chap was so tired that the tears would come at the thought of trudging off on an errand when he wanted to go and lie on the grass in one of the

parks. But he wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his poor jacket and said, "Yes, Mother."

"If ye love me," said Christ, "ye will keep my commandments." A love to Christ that does not keep His commandments is not worthy of the name of love at all; and an obedience without love is like the obedience of the little motorman. Jesus would not count it as obedience at all.

"How can I keep Christ's commandments?" you ask. The answer is, Take Christ for your Friend and Saviour first of all. Read the story of His life over and over again. Get to know Him better than you know the characters in your history books. You will love Him; you will want to trust Him; you will not be able to disobey Him, because you feel it would hurt Him. To obey Him will come to you naturally.

"Did you get tired to-day?" said a minister to his little daughter on the way home from church.

"Yes, father, but I beared it because I love you."

That little girl had found the secret. Love makes hard things easy and obedience a joy.

THE MAN WHO DIED FOR PRINCE CHARLIE.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—John xv. 13.

THOSE of you who are learning history know the mad, sad, glorious story of the '45 Rebellion. You remember how Prince Charles Edward Stuart came over to Scotland to claim the crown for his father, James, the Old Pretender. You recall how at first his cause met with success and then with dismal failure, and how at last it was lost for ever on the bloody field of Culloden. The thing that Scotsmen like best to remember about that old, sad story is the magnificent loyalty of the Scottish Highlanders. Although the Young Pretender wandered among their hills and moors for six long months, although thirty thousand pounds was offered to the man or woman who should lead to his arrest (and thirty thousand pounds was untold wealth to a wretchedly poor people), not one person was found to betray him.

There are many thrilling tales still told in the Scottish Highlands of the wonderful escapes made by the Prince and of how men and women risked their lives and their all to save him, but the finest I ever

heard was told to me by an old Roman Catholic priest who lived near Inverness.

In the autumn of 1746 Prince Charlie was believed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Glen Urquhart, and Cumberland's soldiers were searching for him. Now it so happened that in that glen there lived a man who bore a close resemblance to the Prince. In height, in colouring, in figure, in gait, he was very like him, so like him that at a casual glance he might have been mistaken for him. One evening this man was crossing a lonely mountain path on his homeward way, when he was met by a band of Cumberland's soldiers. The soldiers recognized the resemblance at once. Some of them had seen Prince Charlie in the flesh, the rest had learned his description by heart, but—they were not sure. So they stopped the man and evidently in a somewhat blunt and clumsy fashion they began to question him. "Are you Charles Edward Stuart?" they asked. In a flash the man realized the mistake and realized, too, how he might save the Prince. "Well, what do you think?" he replied coolly. "We think you are," was the answer. "Do you deny it?" Proudly the man drew himself up, as proudly as any king might: "I do not," he said.

Well, the soldiers arrested the brave fellow and took him away to London. Meanwhile there was a fortnight's lull in the search for the Prince, and in that lull Charles Edward Stuart escaped to France. In London the mistake was discovered and the man

who had given himself up instead of the Prince was put to death for his loyalty to the Jacobite cause.

That is a fine story. Can you think of a finer? Can you think of Somebody who gave Himself up, not instead of a prince, but instead of the poor and the needy and the wayward? Can you think of Somebody who because He loved so much laid down His life, not just for His friends, but for those who had often hurt Him and turned away from Him. Can you think of Somebody who laid down His life for you and me?

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head.—John xix. 2.

Do you remember how we spoke about the victor's crown, and how we learned that, in the old days, garlands of pine leaves were given to the victors in the Greek games? The idea was borrowed by the Romans, but as they were a conquering people they gave their crowns chiefly to the victors in battle. Sometimes the Emperor wore a laurel wreath to show how great a conqueror he was, and so the Roman soldiers crowned Jesus with a wreath—not of laurels, but of thorns—to insult Him and to mark the defeat of the King of the Jews.

A great many people have wondered of what this thorn-crown was made. Some think it was formed of twigs of a tree which the Arabs call the *nubk* tree. This tree has thorns about two and a half inches long, which are very sharp and curve backwards. The branches are easily bent and could very readily be plaited into a garland such as the soldiers made. Possibly there were trees of this kind in Herod's garden, or in a waste piece of ground not far away. The soldiers hastily gathered some twigs and wove them into a crown.

Now I don't think these soldiers really meant to hurt Jesus. Their crowning Him with the thorn-wreath was just a sort of rude joke. They wanted to find something that would mark their contempt, and the thorns lay handy. Laurel leaves were a sign of glory, but thorns were a sign of all that was useless and contemptible. And I don't suppose they stopped for a minute to consider how the thorns would hurt.

I want you to remember this, boys and girls, when you are tempted to make rough jokes at the expense of others, when you are tempted to laugh at the weak and the defenceless. You may mean it only in fun, but there are thorns in your fun, and the thorns may make cruel wounds in the heart of another. Be merry; let your laughter ring out; it will make the world a brighter place. But see to it that there are no sharp points in your laughter, that you are not making merry at the expense of another's pain.

1. Thorns have often been looked upon as an emblem of sin. When Adam was turned out of Eden he had to labour hard to obtain his daily bread from the ground, and part of his sentence was that the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles. Some people look upon these thorns as a symbol of the sin with which Adam had to contend. Sin is like a weed, you know. We have to keep carefully rooting it out of our heart garden so that the flowers of righteousness may blossom and bear fruit. And in the same way

many have thought that the thorns which our Saviour wore represented the sins of the world.

Whether that be the case or not, we must never forget that it was your sins and mine that Jesus bore on Calvary, and that all He suffered there was for your sake and mine. We hear these beautiful stories so often that we are apt to look upon them just as beautiful stories, and we lose a great deal of the meaning of them. I want you to remember always that Jesus wore the thorn-crown for you and for me.

I came across a beautiful story the other day. It tells of how Jesus, when a child, made a fair garden. And in the garden He grew roses to make a garland for His hair. Three times a day He watered them and He tended them with loving care. At length the roses blossomed and the Christ-child invited the other children to share His joy. But the children tore the roses from every stem and left the garden stripped and bare. Then they asked Him how He would weave Himself a crown when the roses were all dead. But the Christ-child replied that they had forgotten that they had left the thorns for Him. So—

> They plaited Him a crown of thorns,
> And laid it rudely on His head;
> A garland for His forehead made,
> For roses, drops of blood instead.

Yes, Jesus wore the thorn-crown that you and I might wear the crown of glory.

2. But as we found that we could wear the king's

crown and the priest's crown and the victor's crown, so we can wear the crown of thorns, if we will. For Jesus offers each of us this crown and asks us to wear it for His sake. It is not a crown of sin—that we could never bear, so He has borne it for us—but it is a crown of brave, patient endurance.

To keep a smile on our lips when things are going against us, to do our daily work and drudgery without grumbling, to tackle difficulties and overcome them, to bear disappointment bravely, to keep our temper when it is sorely tried, to speak the truth when a little white lie would mean escape from punishment—that is wearing the crown of thorns. And we can all wear it, even the little ones can begin to wear it by not crying when they cut their finger or bump themselves.

And remember that a crown of thorns bravely borne will turn into a crown of glory.

There is a beautiful legend which tells of how a monk of old found the crown of thorns which Jesus wore and placed it on the altar in his church on Good Friday. And on Easter Morning he went to the chapel to remove the relic which he felt was out of keeping with the joy of the day. But when he opened the door he found the whole place filled with a wondrous perfume. The early morning sunlight streaming through an eastern window fell on the altar where lay, not the crown of thorns, but a crown of flowers; for the thorns had blossomed into flowers, rare and sweet and lovely.

So troubles bravely borne will blossom into flowers

of rarest beauty and perfume; so our crown of thorns, bravely worn for Christ's sake, will some day become a crown of glory.[1]

It was a thorn,
And it stood forlorn
In the burning sunrise land:
A blighted thorn
And at even and morn
Thus it sighed to the desert sand:

"Every flower,
By its beauty's power,
With a crown of glory is crowned;
No crown have I;
For a crown I sigh,
For a crown that I have not found."

Sad thorn, why grieve?
Thou a crown shalt weave,
But not for a maiden to wear;
That crown shall shine
When all crowns save thine
With the glory they gave are gone.

For thorn, my thorn,
Thy crown shall be worn
By the King of Sorrows alone.[2]

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. xxxix. 30, 2 Kings xi. 12, 1 Cor. ix. 25.

[2] Owen Meredith.

SUPPOSING.

Supposing him to be the gardener.—John xx. 15.

SUPPOSING is a great game. Big people have games they play, but none of them equals the children's one of supposing. A lonely child can play it best, a poor child may play it splendidly, and a child possessing everything he can wish can play it too.

Poor children and rich children suppose pretty much the same things. Join a company of children who have everything they want. Then go and watch the game played by poor children. The one company is as happy as the other. If there is any difference the poor children have the greater gift of supposing.

Listen to how Robert Louis Stevenson writes about a party of children playing this very game.

Bring the comb and play upon it!
Marching, here we come!
Willie cocks his Highland bonnet,
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,
Peter leads the rear;
Feet in time, alert and hearty,
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner
Marching double quick;
While the napkin like a banner
Waves upon the stick!

Here's enough of fame and pillage,
Great commander Jane!
Now that we've been round the village,
Let's go home again.

The Heavenly Father provides for the happiness of His children. It is He who has taught them this game. Aren't they happy when they play it! A little slum girl was found amusing herself on a door-step with a wisp of straw tied in the middle with a piece of string. Someone asked her what it was. "That's my dolly," she answered. "But what is the string for?" "That's my dolly's sash."

Surely it is a loving Father who makes a child find joys, not excelled by anything even in a royal palace, out of a wisp of straw and a piece of string.

Once I watched a little girl—the daughter of a doctor—nursing a broken doll very carefully. "Dolly had to have her leg ampated," she informed me. "That is the surgeon," she said, pointing to a doll leaning against a toy bed. "The night nurse has fallen asleep," she added, pointing to another—a dilapidated-looking figure with hanging head, which had been placed on a chair. "She has not had a wink of sleep —not a wink."

Lady Henry Somerset tells how, in a hospital, she

saw the doctors changing a plaster cast which held a crippled boy's limb. It was a painful operation, yet the little sufferer never winced. All the time he made a curious buzzing sound with his mouth. After the doctors left, she said to him, "How could you stand it?" "That's nothin'," he answered; "why I just make believe that a bee was stingin' me. Bees don't hurt much. And I kept buzzin' because I was afraid I'd forget about its bein' a bee."

When Stevenson was a little boy he was very delicate. His nurse taught him the 23rd Psalm. He pictured it all to himself. The "pastures green" were stubble-fields near his own home; "death's dark vale," a certain archway in a cemetery not far off. These pictures remained with him all his life.

The worst of it is that we seem to suppose less and less as we grow older. Boys and girls, hold on to your supposing. If you are good it will bring beautiful thoughts to your minds.

And God will help you with your supposing if you ask Him. He will not only help you with your *supposing*: He will make you feel sure that certain things are true. He is training us for a world that we cannot see. And He will tell us things in wonderful ways. Where our supposing ends, God will step in and make us feel that we *know*.

Mary supposed Jesus to be a gardener. She thought her Master was dead. She was not far wrong

in her supposing after all. Jesus is the Gardener of our lives. He tends and cares for us, His plants. And we can repay His care by growing day by day more lovely in character, more beautiful in heart.

HIS LAMBS.

Feed my lambs.—John xxi. 15.

One evening a minister was leaving a sheep farm in the company of the farmer. There was a big threatening cloud in the sky, and just as they reached the gate the farmer turned back to call to his son, "Take great care of the lambs! There is a storm coming."

When Jesus was going to leave the earth, He was anxious that the lambs should be well looked after, so He said to Peter, "Take care of the lambs." He Himself would still be looking after the lambs and caring for them although they could see Him no longer, but He wanted them to have a human friend also, whom they could see and who would care for them.

Now, of course, you know who the lambs are. The lambs are the boys and girls. The sheep are the fathers and mothers, but the lambs are the children. Later, Jesus told Peter to feed the sheep, but He put the lambs first.

I wonder why Jesus put the lambs first. Well, I think there were three reasons.

And the first was because He *loved* them so much. Jesus loves everybody with a love so big and so tender

that we shall never understand it till we go to be with Him in Heaven; but I think He loves the children in a special sort of way because they are so pure and innocent. The grown-up people often despised and rejected Him when He was in the world, but the children gathered round Him and looked up into His kind face, and listened to His words, and the little children who knew Him on earth never forgot their Friend.

Then I think Jesus put the lambs first because He *pitied* them so much. They were so weak and helpless and they needed His care so badly. They needed His strong loving arms round them to protect them from harm and danger.

Another reason why He put them first was because He *valued* them so much. Soon they would grow up to be sheep, and the whole future of the flock depended on how they were fed and cared for.

Jesus wants all the children to be His lambs. He is the Good Shepherd and He loves them and wants to keep them safe. All the children can be His lambs if they wish to.

Away at Amoy, in China, there lived a little Chinese boy who had learned from the missionaries about Jesus and His love. His father also had heard the good news and had become a Christian. One day the little boy came to his father and told him that he wanted to be baptized. But the father thought that perhaps the boy was not old enough to understand all that it meant to be a Christian, so he told him that he was too young to be baptized. What do you think the little fellow

replied? "But Jesus promised to carry the lambs. I am only a little boy, so it will be easy for Jesus to carry me." Don't you think he was a very sensible little boy? You are never too small a lamb for Jesus to carry.

Do you know, little children, that Jesus is called by the same name as you are? He is called a lamb—the Lamb of God, who offered Himself up on the cross so that you might all become His lambs and go to live with Him forever.

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad;
The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road.

. . . . . .

The lambs were weary, and crying
With a weak, human cry.
I thought on the Lamb of God
Going meekly to die.

Up in the blue, blue mountains
Dewy pastures are sweet;
Rest for the little bodies,
Rest for the little feet.

But for the Lamb of God,
Up on the hill-top green,
Only a Cross of shame
Two stark crosses between.[1]

Will you ask the Lamb of God to make you His very own lamb?

[1] Katharine Tynan.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

The disciple whom Jesus loved.—John xxi. 20.

In most families where there is a little brother or sister some years younger than the rest that little one is the family favourite or pet. There was a favourite in Christ's large family of twelve disciples, and I don't need to tell you that his name was John. Why was John Christ's favourite disciple? Why is he known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"?

Well, I think there are three reasons. The first is, that John was the youngest of the band. He was very likely just a lad when Jesus called him to leave all and follow Him. The Bible speaks of "James and John, the sons of Zebedee," as if the elder brother took care of the younger.

Then John was Christ's cousin—so was James, for that matter. Salome, their mother, is supposed to have been a sister of Mary, Christ's mother. Some of you know what a great friend a cousin can be.

But perhaps the biggest reason why Christ loved John so much was that John himself loved Christ so dearly. John was absolutely devoted to his Master. And because he was so devoted he came to understand

Christ's heart and know Christ's mind better than any of the other eleven. You know how it is with yourself and anyone whom you love very deeply: you can almost read each other's thoughts, you can see into each other's hearts. You understand what your friend feels and your friend understands what you feel without being told.

John had been a follower of John the Baptist before he became a follower of Christ. He was one of the two disciples to whom John the Baptist one day pointed out Jesus, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" These two disciples, we are told, turned and followed Christ and spent that day with Him in His own home. And because of that one day spent with Christ, John was ready to follow Him to the end of the world. He went back to his work for a little while; but when Christ came one day to the seashore where he and his brother James were mending their fishing-nets, they both arose at His call and followed Him.

John was Christ's favourite, but I think he was Peter's too. Peter, with his great warm heart and ready tongue, took a fancy to the eager lad who worshipped the Master so. And Peter, James, and John it was who formed the inner circle of Christ's disciples—those whom He chose to be with Him on very special occasions. They were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, they were in the room when He brought the little daughter of Jairus back to life, they were beside Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Now a great many people have pictured John as a very gentle, almost faultless youth, but there they have made a mistake. John had his faults like everybody else. When Christ first knew him he was passionate, jealous, ambitious, and narrow-minded. Indeed so hot-tempered were John and his brother that Christ nicknamed them "sons of thunder." But John lived three years in Christ's company and he became another John. John the "son of thunder" disappeared and in his place appeared John "the apostle of love," the apostle whose favourite saying to the end of his long life was, "Little children, love one another."

After Christ's death and resurrection, John stayed a good deal in Jerusalem—he had Christ's mother in his care, you remember. But he and his friend Peter did a lot of preaching together, and many adventures they had.

We lose sight of John in the Book of Acts and we have to go elsewhere to learn what became of him. It is said that he settled at Ephesus for many years. Then there arose a persecution of the Christians under the Roman Emperor Domitian, and during that persecution John was banished to the small bare island of Patmos in the Ægean Sea. Patmos was an island with a state prison such as existed on the Bass Rock in the days of the Covenanters. It was while in Patmos that John had those wonderful visions of a new heaven and a new earth which we call the Book of Revelation.

When Domitian died, John, it is believed, was released. He returned to Ephesus and there he spent the last of his days. There also in his old age—for he lived, they say, to about a hundred—he wrote that marvellous story of Christ's life which men call "the Gospel according to St. John." It is the most beautiful of all the Gospels, for it shows us more clearly than any of the others the very mind and heart of Christ. And what enabled John to write his beautiful Gospel was the same thing that made him Christ's favourite disciple — love. And if we too would learn anything of the mind or heart of Christ for us there is only one way—John's way—the way of love.

Would you like to hear one of the many stories which they tell of the apostle in his old age? It is the story I like best, because it shows John following Christ still.

On one occasion when he was preaching in a city near Ephesus the apostle noticed in the church a fine and noble-looking youth. His heart went out to the lad, and he entrusted him to the special care of the pastor of the church. For a time all went well. The pastor fulfilled his charge and instructed and baptized the young man. But by and by he relaxed his care somewhat, and about the same time the youth fell into evil company. He went from bad to worse, till at last he joined a band of brigands, whose chief he became.

Some time after, the apostle revisited the city and asked the pastor of the church what had become of his deposit. "Thy deposit!" stammered the pastor, for he knew of no money which he had received from John. "Yes," said the apostle, "I demand the young man whose soul I entrusted to thee." "He is dead," said the pastor with tears. "Dead!" cried John. "Of what death did he die?" "He is dead to God," replied the pastor, "for he became so wicked that he was forced to flee to the mountains where he is now a robber chief."

When John heard this, nothing would serve him but that he must go immediately in search of the young man; so procuring a horse and a guide he set off for the mountain fastnesses where the robbers dwelt. Ere long he fell into the hands of their sentinels, and of them he demanded to be led at once to the chief.

But when the chief saw John he was so overcome with shame that he turned to flee. "My son, my son!" cried the old man, stumbling after him, "why dost thou flee from thy father? Have pity on my halting steps. And fear not. There is yet hope for thee. I will stand with thee before the Lord Christ; if need be I will gladly die for thee as He died for us. Stay; believe it is Christ that sent me."

The young man stopped, listened, flung away his weapons, trembled, wept, and throwing himself into the arms of the aged apostle implored his pardon. The apostle tenderly raised him, talked with him,

prayed with him, and did not leave him until he was restored once more to the Church.

That is the story I like best of John, the beloved disciple, for it shows him loving and seeking and saving the lost, as Jesus did before him.

CURIOSITY-BOXES.

What shall this man do?—John xxi. 21.

If anybody were to ask me what I thought the most striking thing in the character of boys and girls, do you know what I should reply? Well, I think I should answer, "Curiosity." Boys and girls are always wanting to know things, they are always asking questions. Of course grown-up people want to know things too, but if you counted the number of questions a grown-up person asked in a day and the number a small boy or girl asked, and compared the two lists, I think you would find that the small boy or girl had asked at least ten questions to every one asked by the grown-up. No wonder that children are often called "curiosity-boxes."

Why is it that boys and girls are so curious? Well, I think God made them curious so that they might learn things. Have you ever looked into the eyes of a baby? They are just one big question. He seems to be wondering about everything. And as soon as he begins to be able to put words together he asks questions. It is just his way of learning all about the big world into which God has sent him.

Now when some of us older people were about as

big as you are, our fathers and mothers used to believe that children should be seen and not heard. I don't know that there wasn't a certain amount of wisdom in that, but the result was that a great many questions we wanted to ask were never answered, and we had to wait and wonder till we could find out the answer for ourselves. I don't think your fathers and mothers are often like that. I fancy they are quite ready to let you ask questions, and that they generally reply to them when they can. But I want you to remember that there are some questions in regard to which you will have to wait for an answer till you are older. Sometimes father and mother refuse to answer our questions and we have to take them on trust and believe that they know best.

Some people talk about curiosity as if it were a wrong thing, but that is a mistake. Most of the big inventions and discoveries are the result of curiosity. Men have wanted to know and prove things, and they have searched and experimented until they were successful. If people had not wanted to find out more than they knew already we might still be savages living in dens and caves. So you see curiosity is not a bad thing in itself. But it may be used in bad or foolish ways. Shall I tell you some of those ways?

Well, first, there is the curiosity that wastes itself in trifles that are of no possible account or use. Did you ever hear the story of the man who was so inquisitive that he could never rest till he knew the

why and the wherefore of everything? One dark night he was walking home from an evening party and he saw a lamp-post with a sign on the crossbar. It was too high up for him to read in the dark, so he "shinned" up the lamp-post, evening dress and all. What do you think was written on the sign? "Wet paint!"

Now, sometimes boys and girls ask questions just for the sake of asking, and when I hear them I always think of that man who scaled the lamp-post. Only it is generally others who suffer by their curiosity and not themselves. A witty man once said of a certain inquisitive friend, "Talk to him of Jacob's ladder, and he will ask the number of the steps." And there is often just about as much sense as that in the questions some little people ask.

That kind of curiosity is rather silly, but after all, it does not do very much harm to anyone except that it rather annoys those of whom the questions are asked. But there is another kind of curiosity, which is really harmful. It is undue curiosity about the affairs of other people.

That was the kind of curiosity Peter showed in our text. Jesus had been telling him that one day he should die for his Master's sake, but Peter was not content to know about his own future, he wanted to know, too, what was going to happen to his friend John. And Jesus rebuked him. "What is that to thee?" He asked; "follow thou me." "I am well able to look after John," He seemed to say: "trust his

future to Me and don't waste your time or energy wondering what will happen to him. Your real concern is to follow Me."

Now some people are never happy unless they know all about their friends and neighbours. They are always poking their nose into the affairs of others and trying to find out all their secrets. This is a very mean kind of curiosity; there is something very sneaky about it. Don't have anything to do with it. Never search other people's drawers, or read their letters; never listen to conversations you are not intended to overhear, or try to find out the weak spots in your neighbour's character. Be above that sort of thing.

But there is a still more dangerous kind of curiosity —the curiosity concerning evil. It was that curiosity that led Eve astray, and it is the same curiosity that has led men and women and boys and girls astray all through the long centuries.

There is a sort of risk and excitement about this curiosity that attracts. People don't want to be bad, but they want to know by experience just a little about badness. They think they are quite able to take care of themselves, and they just want to see how far they can go and come back safely.

Well, I want you to remember two things. First, a great many never come back. Their first taste of evil acts like poison. It is like a match set to a haystack. Soon the whole stack is in a blaze.

Livingstone tells us about a clever dragon-fly in

Africa which catches its prey by appealing to its curiosity. When it is in the grub stage it feeds upon ants, and it catches them by putting its head into the ground and waving its tail in the air. The ants come near to examine this strange sight and are immediately seized by the grippers with which the tail is furnished. In the same way a great many people have been ruined just by going to see what evil is like.

And, second, those who do return are never quite the same again. You can't touch pitch without having your hands soiled. You can't associate with evil without being a little less pure. If you do come through safely it will nevertheless leave its mark on your mind and heart and will, and your most bitter regret all your days may be that you ever had anything to do with it.

God gave us that gift of curiosity, boys and girls, so that we might learn things wise and good and true. Be curious about things that are worthy of your curiosity. Be curious about the highest things. Be curious above all to know more of God and of His love, and He will reveal Himself to you and teach you all that it is good for you to know.

THE BIGGEST BIOGRAPHY.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.—John xxi. 25.

I WONDER how many of you could tell me what a biography is? A biography is just a history of somebody's life. Sometimes, when a great man dies, a friend or acquaintance writes an account of his life and that account is called a biography. Our text says that, if Jesus' biography were written, it would occupy so many books that the world would not contain them. That seems a very extraordinary thing to say, does it not? I wonder what it means.

Well, first you must understand that this is an Eastern way of speaking. People in the East don't speak or think quite as we do. When they want to impress a certain point very much on anybody's mind, they put it in a striking way. They exaggerate it so as to make it appear real and vivid. John had been trying to tell something of what Jesus said and did, and when he came to the end he found that he had just put down a tiny fragment of all that his Master had accomplished. If he had done it thoroughly he

would have had to note every look and word and act of Jesus, for everything that Christ said or did was worth recording. And he would have had to relate all that Jesus said, not only to the disciples, but to everyone He ever met. So in a sort of despair the apostle exclaimed that if all the things Jesus had done were written, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.

Sometimes we think we should like to know a little more about Jesus and we are sorry that more was not written about Him. We should like to know a little more about His boyhood. We have only one story about that—the story of His visit to the Temple at Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. We should like to know what He said to the children when He took them in His arms, or when He watched them at their games. We should like to know more about the sick people He made well, and the bad people He made good.

Some years ago there was found among the ruins of an Egyptian city one page from a book containing sayings which were supposed to have been uttered by Jesus. All over the world people were interested and excited about it, and long articles were written on the subject in many of the chief newspapers and periodicals. Fancy all that interest about one page, and try to imagine what excitement there would be if a whole new Gospel were found!

But after the newness of the discovery had worn off perhaps we should think no more about the new Gospel than we do about the four Gospels we already have. I

wonder if we really value them as we should. Do we read them and know them as we ought? God has given us just four short Gospels, but He has told us in them all that we really need to know about Jesus. He has told us enough to show us how much we need Jesus' help, how much Jesus loves us, and how He lived and died for our sakes. He has told us enough to lead us to love and follow Jesus. I wonder if we are really learning all that those four stories teach us.

There is another thing I want you to remember. The writer of this verse was nearer the truth than he knew. For the work of Jesus did not end on earth. Will you look at the very next verse after our text—the first verse in the Book of Acts? St. Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts, speaks to his friend Theophilus about a "former treatise" which he had written. That "former treatise" is just the Gospel of St. Luke, and he says that in it he told all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach until the day in which He was taken up to Heaven. That means that Jesus' work on earth was just a beginning; it was just the beginning of what He has been doing in the world ever since; and if all the things were written down that Jesus has done since He went back to live with His Father in Heaven, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.

What are some of the things Jesus has done in the world?

Well, first He has changed the natures of millions and millions of people. He has made bad people good, restless people patient, cruel people kind, rough people gentle, angry people self-controlled, selfish people self-sacrificing, hard people loving, timid people brave.

And then He has brought light into many dark places. The world was a very dark place when He came. People were dying without hope, and because they had no hope beyond the grave they said, "Let us eat, and drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we die." But it was only a very small number who could enjoy life, for a great part were miserable slaves, and of the rest many were so poor that they could do little more than just exist. If one man received an injury from another he never rested till that injury was avenged, because nobody had taught men to forgive. The poor, and the weak, and the helpless were downtrodden and oppressed, because nobody had taught men to love.

But Jesus brought light, and love, and joy, and hope into men's hearts. By His life and death He gave them new views of life and death, and new ideas of duty. And the light He brought is still shining; and it will shine brighter and brighter until it has lit up all the dark places of the earth and all men come to know Him and to love Him.

And then Jesus has worked through those people whom He has filled with His love. He has put it into their hearts to think and feel for others, and to help the suffering and the sad.

Let me tell you how a little girl helped. She lived

in a cottage by the side of a country road. Near her home was a convict prison, and every day the prisoners marched past her cottage to their work in a quarry some distance away. They were chained together and were accompanied by six warders—two in front, one on either side, and two behind.

Now the work in the quarry was very hard, and in the summer-time the convicts used to return in the evening looking hot and tired and dusty and depressed. The little girl felt very very sorry for them and wondered what she could do to help. One evening a brilliant idea struck her.

In her garden was a well of sweet, cool spring water. She ran for a bucket and filled it at the well. Then she carried it out to the road and waited.

Soon she heard the sound of the men coming—tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. On they came, and when the officer in command saw the child standing in the middle of the road with her bucket he called to her to stand aside. But she held her ground and presently he was obliged to call "Halt!"

Then very timidly the little girl asked, "Please, may I give your men a drink?" The warder was so surprised that he gave a gruff assent; but when he saw how heavy the bucket was he ordered two of the prisoners to help her to carry it.

All down the line she went, and wherever she went a wonderful change came over the faces of the men. One said, "Thank you, missy"; another exclaimed, "God bless your blue eyes!"; while his companion

added, "and your kind heart." One man who had a little girl of his own at home lifted her up and kissed her, and then put her down quickly and looked straight ahead.

Every evening through that hot, dusty summer the child was at her post on the road. And every evening the men stopped and drank from her bucket of water. They came to see in her, not just a little girl with blue eyes and fair curls, but the very likeness of Jesus Christ Himself, and their hard hearts were wonderfully softened.

That little girl was adding her bit to the biography of Jesus. Boys and girls, are we?

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